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Different Worlds

THE MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTURE ROLE-PLAYERS

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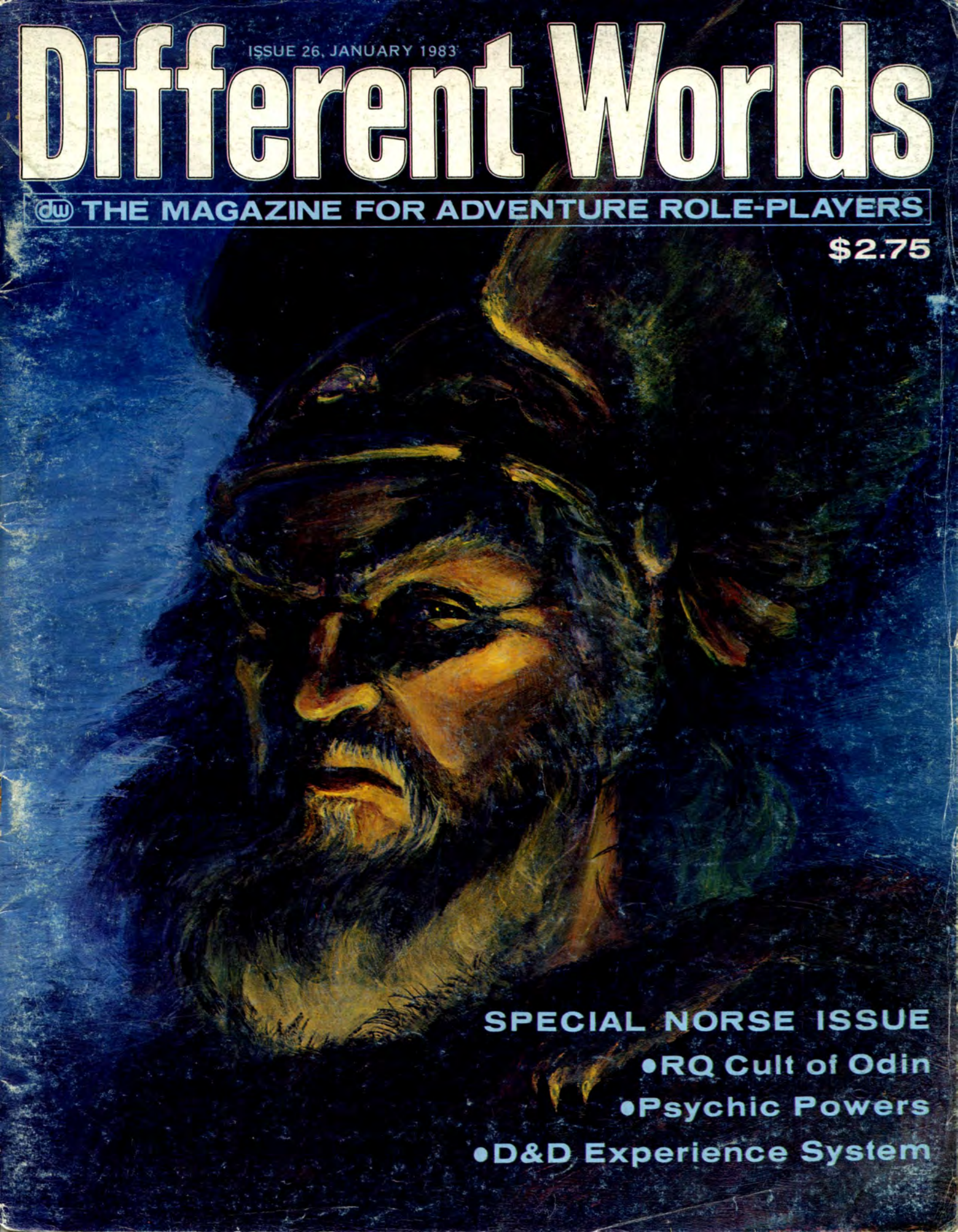

SPECIAL NORSE ISSUE

- RQ Cult of Odin
- Psychic Powers
- D&D Experience System

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By Laurence J. P. Gillespie
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The author has come up with a set of uniform experience scales for all character classes resulting in smoother level progression.

POLL

Format changes in the last few months have resulted in a series of popular issues. More changes may be coming up and we would like to have some feedback from you before we proceed.

Please remember that a lot of the changes for the better have come about because of your contribution to the last poll so don't hesitate to send in your answers.

1. List the role-playing games you play regularly.
2. List all the gaming magazines you read regularly.

Rate the following. 1 is bad, 10 is good:

3. "Reviews"
4. "Books & Role-Playing"
5. "Adventure by Design"
6. "Metal Marvels"
7. "Quick Plugs"
8. "Sword of Hollywood"
9. "Movie Reviews"
10. "Gigi"
11. Interior Artwork
12. *DW* covers in general
13. The "Superhero" Issue *(DW 23)*
14. This issue

Choose one answer for questions below.

15. Would you like to see a full page comic strip in *DW?* a) yes, b) no
16. Should Metal Marvels be changed to a one page format? a) yes, b) no
17. Should *DW* have an article about: a) naked elf women, b) naked elf men, c) naked elf robots, or d) none of the above, thank you.
18. Would you like to see more scenarios in *DW?* a) yes, b) no, c) even less

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INTERIORS: David Dudley pages 16, 19, 20, 23; Brad W Foster pages 24, 25, 27, 28; Patrick Jenkins page 30; Christine J Mansfield pages 8, 10; John Sullivan page 7.

Thank you for the above answers. Now for some lists:

19. List all the game cons you attend regularly.

20. List your three favorite game companies.

21. Which is your favorite *DW* issue?

22. Your least favorite issue of *DW?*

23. Which is your favorite article?

24. Your least favorite article?

25. Your favorite movie?

Now let's move on to tougher questions:

26. What is your favorite role-playing system? Why?

27. Do you read *DW* because of a single column or type of article in particular? Please explain.

28. Are there any topics (such as superhero games) that you would like to see covered by a column?

29. Do you like the special topic issues such as this one? Do you have any comments about the past ones? Would you like to see more? On any particular subject?

30. What is your age?

Thank you. If you are having trouble answering any of the above questions just skip over them.

Please send your poll replies to: *Different Worlds*, PO Box 6302, Albany, CA, 94706-0302, USA.

Yurek Chodak

stamped self-addressed envelope for all submissions. Remuneration for articles is one cent per word of published matter, and artwork is paid at $20 per printed page rate (i.e., ¼ page is paid $5). Color covers are paid $75.

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DIFFERENT VIEWS

LETTERS COLUMN

A True Compliment

Different Worlds 25 appeared in a hobby shop here recently, and I wanted to write and compliment you for an excellent job. The cover art and interior artwork were beautiful. Several of the articles stood out as well and were fun to read. The "Divination Skills" section for *Call of Cthulhu* should do well in my current (sporadic) campaign. Paul Reiche did a nice job on GENCON XV (I wasn't there, but reading about it was almost as good as going), and the following article on "Convention Tips" by Ken Rolston should be made required reading for conventioneers. The only problem is that there are very few game conventions in the Louisville area, and we can't travel much. When we can go, though, we'll take his tips with us.

John Sapienza's article on calendars was interesting, but it seemed to make the whole idea too logical and sterile. A calendar for a fantasy world might be best done in a purely chaotic, illogical, and ridiculous fashion. Give your fantasy world two or three moons, some random comet-comings, and piles of kings who want to declare every odd Thursday as the New Year and Royal Yeoman Day or something. Locals and commoners set up their own holidays and workdays, each religion has all sorts of different ideas on holy and unholy days, merchants have their Super Savings All Nite Long Bazaars at random times, and so forth. In short, a good fantasy calendar should be a complete unreadable mess. Seriously! It would reflect the richness of the culture much better that way, in all its complexity and beauty and confusing splendor. Calendars should be works of art.

Finally, I want to thank you for the Dwarf articles in *DW 24*. I've got a dwarf character in a *RuneQuest* campaign who is a complete drunken fool with a gross and obnoxious sense of humor, and who also used to have a pet rat that allegedly ate boogers (dried nasal mucus) before it was speared. The article by Greg Stafford "Why I Dislike Mostali," in mentioning that only dwarfs who acted as individuals had a chance to be happy, fulfilled, and free, completely vindicated Gumbo Burgher as a character. He must have become disillusioned with life in the Great Clockwork Factory, which would explain everything about his weird behavior. Thank you, thank you, thank you for that. Gumbo would also thank you, but he's in jail awaiting trial, if orcs give them.

Looking forward to more good issues . . .

Roger E. Moore
Louisville, KY

GENCON Opinion

I read the editorial by Mr. Gygax in issue 65 of *Dragon* magazine with great interest. However, it seems that he is greatly mistaken.

I attended GENCON XV as a referee for the *AD&D* Open, and I found that the events at the convention were largely TSR-based. The only events that I heard of being canceled were the non-TSR events. I wonder why?

It is a well known fact that role-playing is not exclusively composed of TSR games, but at GENCON the feeling that TSR owned the role-playing market was there.

ORIGINS '83 will be held at Cobo Hall, in Detroit. Plans are being made for the events, and to my certain knowledge, there will be at least one event using the *AD&D* rules. Good accomodations can be had within walking distance of the convention, and everything at ORIGINS will be held under one roof. This is in contrast with GENCON, which was spread over 5 buildings at the University of Parkside, which is miles from the nearest town. In addition, there will be room in the events to handle a large number of players, and no events should be sold out.

Based on the above, which convention would you rather attend?

Dennis Caswell
Assistant Role-Playing Coordinator
& Designer for Origins '83

A *RuneQuest* fan Speaks Out

Great issue on the Mostali! What with these, the Dragonewts in *WF 14*, and the Trolls about whom I am waiting to hear with increasing frustration, we now have very fine accounts of non-human Glorantan races with non-human (if similar to some human) motivations. As an archaeologist, I'd love to know what "archaeological fact" led Poul Anderson to assert that the real Picts were rather tall, but that's a niggle. Going back a bit, and closer to my own specialities, I have to state that several of Michael Kolb's comments in his account of the "Cult of Dionysos *(DW 22)*" are dodgy, especially the myth, which presents as standard what were late developments at best, and takes no account of the odd fact that Dionysos' name appears twice on Linear B tablet-fragments, without context, which rather undermines the traditional scholarly derivation of the cult from Thrace. More seriously, in my view, is the cleaning-up of the ecstatic rites, which were believed to involve the tearing apart of animals by the initiates in their frenzy — see many Greek vase-paintings — and also what happens to Pentheus in the Bacchae. The story of how Dionysos brought Hephaistos back to Olympus, one of the early myths to judge from vase-paintings, might also have been mentioned. Oh, yes, and priest*esses* of Dionysos? I'd love to know the evidence for that one!

Oliver Dickinson
Haxby, York, England

Trolls Dwarfs Ugh! We Want Elfpack!
(Addressed to Ruric the Lightson)

As a good Yelmalio Rune lord I'm sure you were as offended as I by the misleading and excessively favorable publicity given to Dwarfs in *DW 24* and Trolls in the recent Chaosium publication, *Trollpak*. Surely any reasoning being would have much preferred a more useful product like an *Elfpack*.

I was particularly bothered by the butchered translation of my own writings. The fiends excerpted only a tiny portion of my literate and interesting chronicle. I travel the world and they chose to publish only a few days I spent in a bug-infested troll town. Furthermore, they changed things around by downplaying the cleverness with which I duped the trolls into exchanging wondrous relics and powerful magic items for worthless silver. Instead they foolishly focused on the activities of a group of my employees who spent their spare time in a slimy troll bar. How any self-respecting human could drink that stuff is beyond me. Really.

Redbird
Priest of Lhankor Mhy and Issaries
(Personality from *Trollpak*)

Review Rebuttal

We'd like to make a few comments on C. D. Martin's review of the *Ysgarth Rule System* in *Different Worlds 23*. While the review had its good moments, we feel that many important points were overlooked, and a degree of bias, perhaps from ignorance, colored his observations. As *YRS* players, we think that, perhaps Mr. Martin did not look closely enough at the rules, which may explain some of his rather opinionated and unsupported comments. Some of these problems can be pointed out fairly easily.

First, the *YRS* no longer costs only $9.95. That was the price of the first edition, which is no longer available. The edition which is now available is a Revised Second Edition, which retails for $11.95. In this edition such things as missing pages are much rarer, and many text corrections, like the use of EYE as a characteristic are corrected and updated.

Mr. Martin seriously misunderstood the *YRS* alignment system, seeing only the surface resemblance to *AD&D* and overlooking the overwhelming fundamental differences. While the terms Lawful, Neutral, Chaotic, Evil, and Good are used, the structure supporting them is totally different. In *YRS* these descriptive terms represent flexible numerical records of actions and attitudes, while in *D&D* they are an artificial personality structure. Such things as alignment detection, alignment shock, and alignment languages are alien to *YRS*. The *YRS* alignment represents the actions of the character, while in *D&D* it often dictates the character's actions. This is certainly a profound and fundamental difference.

What's wrong with a D1000? It is no harder to roll 3D10 to form a permillenile roll than to roll 2D10 for a percentile. This does not explain such unsupported statements as "The *Ysgarth* combat system is unbalanced," or "Great detail in combat resolution does not mean realism." If Mr.

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Martin believes these things he could at least explain why they apply to the *YRS* and give some examples. The *YRS* combat system is not unbalanced. We have found that it takes only slightly longer than *D&D* or *RQ*, and is considerably more detailed and realistic, in that location covers all major areas, armor modifies both by deflection and absorbtion, and only three die rolls are needed. Also, the coverage of movement is more than sufficient. Those four sentences you mention explain how far a character moves in a given time and how that rate can be modified, which is certainly sufficient for a game intended for role-play, not tactical or miniature play.

As to religion: Baldr is indeed the only god worshiped by more than 2% of the population. However, when you think that this is a percentage of the entire population of a world, 2% is a lot, especially as most of those worshipers are concentrated in a limited area. This area breakdown is given in Book 5, and explains the actual percentages for a given religion rather than the whole amalgam of Ysgarth. For example, Baldr would be worshiped by over 7% of the population of the Saexe Empire. More may not be better here, but when 155 gods are available it provides a range for the GM to pick from for his campaign. Certainly it is better than describing only one or two deities and leaving him stranded. While *YRS* covers NPCs and Magic Items in less than two pages (at least for general policy), your arguments against this are spurious. This lack of regimentation is ideal for allowing gamemasters to develop their NPCs as they see fit and appropriate to their world. The only burden this places on the GM is one of imagination, which he must have to make good background characters. Certainly sufficient material is provided in the rules to make establishing the mechanical descriptions of the characters easy. Over-limitation of options in creating world background and NPCs is one of the main problems of many other systems, robbing GMs of creative opportunities. All of the 17 numbers Mr. Martin objects to in the NPC descriptions are characteristics, though they are determined rather than primary characteristics, but what use would the primary characteristics be in this situation, when it is the characteristics which are determined from them which are actually used in play? Having such detail available to the GM means that he can meet any eventual situation. Better to have too much available than too little.

Mr. Martin's objection to the 'Sword of the Marauder,' which works against women, children and the elderly, is rather small minded. The presence of such an evil item says nothing about the nature of the game, and certainly most FRPers acknowledge the presence and importance of evil and evil forces in most campaigns.

How the *YRS* could continue escalation of monsters and magic items is a mystery to us, when only 40 creatures are described and even fewer magic items, and there is constant, repetitive stress placed on the use of logic and realistic consideration of placement in setting up encounters and giving out magic items. If anything, the tendency in the *YRS* is away from monsters and magic items, with an emphasis on a more natural and believable type of encounter.

The trend in gaming has been towards simplicity of concept, or more accuracy, towards consistency, not towards oversimplified mechanics. The *YRS* is a simple and consistent system, which achieves maximum realism with minimal mechanics, and almost no mechanical inconsistencies. The *YRS* does not really defy any trend in FRPing. Rather, it is the essence of a trend towards consistency, with the valuable addition of a flexibility and open-endedness which goes beyond that of earlier systems, even *RuneQuest*.

On the whole Mr. Martin would do well to take a somewhat deeper look at the games which he reviews. While he makes some reasonable complaints and observations, they are almost all on a superficial level, and when he gets down to serious matters he misses the real implications and applications of many of the systems and concepts in the *YRS* which he finds questionable. Too many of his statements are unsupported by reference to the subject material, and he seems to speak from a clear bias towards certain other systems, and a general unwillingness to consider other possibilities with an open and receptive mind. It is also quite clear that he has not done more than read the text, for if he had actually played the *YRS* or thought a bit about what he read, he would have seen the answers to some of his questions.

We were glad to see a review of the *YRS* in *Different Worlds,* and hope you will continue to present reviews of new and interesting material. As recently converted players to the *YRS* (at least most of us), we wish your review had been more balanced.

David Feaster,
Cliff Hall,
Ian J. Hense,
David F. Nalle

(David F. Nalle is the designer of YRS — Ed.) □

illustration by John Sullivan

CTHULHU IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD ~~MEN~~ MEALS

Psychic Powers

By Randy McCall

It has often been a contention of believers in the occult that all humans possess innate psychic powers, but only a small percentage of the population has learned how to use them.

To recreate the existence of psychic powers in *Call of Cthulhu*, the following system is of use. A keeper may take it whole, modify it heavily to suit his campaign, or ignore it completely, as he sees fit.

This system is especially good for rolling up non-player characters which the keeper feels need some paranormal abilities. It can even be used for various non-human monstrosities. It is possible that some of the spells contained in the various arcane books simply are descriptions of ways to harness one's inner power and create one of the effects mentioned below.

Rolling Psychic Abilities

When initially rolling up a character, if the player can successfully make a roll equal to or less than his POW score, then he has latently powerful psychic abilities.

The keeper may either let him have his powers already developed at the start of his existence as a player-character, or he can force him to gain his powers through some means on an adventure. This latter system is probably preferable. The investigator could have his powers mature through training at a Tibetan monastery or other such school, or he could have them suddenly appear after he has undergone a severe psychic shock, or he could learn to exercise them by using techniques contained in an ancient manuscript. He could also have his powers awakened by the "touch" of some great Force, such as Yog-Sothoth.

Characters that failed to roll their POW or less on D100 may still be able to gain psychic powers of course, but it should be much more difficult for them. Whereas a person with latent

illustrations by Christine J. Mansfield

power might develop his talent through simply handling the Shining Tetrahedron, one without his mental powers so close to the surface might have to study for years. This is all under the control of the keeper.

Psychic Powers

The exact power of a character can either be rolled up randomly on the following table, or the keeper can choose the power as best suits his purpose. In the case of non-player-characters, of course, it is wisest to pick the appropriate abilities carefully.

Psychic Powers Table

1D20 Roll	*Power*
1	Telepathy
2	Empathy
3	Precognition
4	Retrocognition
5	Clairvoyance
6	Healing
7	Sense Aura
8	Telekinesis
9	Pyrokinesis
10-19	Sensitive
20	Roll 1D10 twice

Paranormal Abilities

Sensitives – Sensitives are people that have no overt psychic abilities, but can pick up vibrations and feelings from people, places, and things.

Whenever a sensitive comes into contact with something charged with magical, spiritual, or emotional energy, or when one enters an area where a very good, evil, or violent act took place, they can try to roll their Power or less on D100. If the roll is made, then, in the case of some special artifact, they will feel an unnatural warmth or cold emanating from the object (keeper's discretion). In the case of an area where a good or bad action was performed, they will either like or dislike the place.

If an area is haunted by some spirit or entity, they will both feel an unnatural warmth or cold, and will either like or dislike the place, depending upon the nature of the entity haunting the area.

A sensitive only begins with a chance equal to POW or less of feeling things, but for every 20% Occult or 05% Cthulhu Mythos learned (or, optionally, by learning from some book, or knowledgeable entity), this chance may be increased to POWx2, x3, x4, or up to the maximum of POWx5.

Telepathy – A character with telepathy can convey or receive one thought per melee round if he successfully makes a skill roll. Telepathy starts out with a base chance equal to the character's INT+POW rounded down to the nearest 05% increment. The interpretation of "one thought" is up the individual keeper. It should be remembered that, though the human mind can conceive of an idea which might take hours to express verbally, any simple statement such as "Yes" or "No" still constitutes one thought.

Also, unless the character whom the telepath is trying to reach is actively opening his mind to the telepath, requiring a conscious effort, the telepath will need to overcome the target's POW with a POW vs. POW roll on the resistance table. If the targeted individual has some paranormal ability (even if latent), or can successfully roll his Occult or Cthulhu Mythos skill or less on D100, then he can recognize the subtle prodding in his brain as some sort of telepathic probe, assuming that the telepath either read his thoughts or unsuccessfully tried to broadcast a thought to him. If the telepath tried to broadcast a thought and succeeded, no skill roll or paranormal powers are needed to recognize the alien thought in the brain of the target, and he will be aware that something is seriously wrong. If the target is a telepath as well, then he can actively resist contact if he wishes. If he does, then the sending party must overcome the victim's POW twice. If he fails either try, then the attempt is a failure.

This ability costs a point of POW per mile or fraction thereof that the telepathic attempt is made, whether or not successful. The POW must be expended each round that the telepath keeps up trying or communicating. To successfully contact someone, the target must be within sight or sound of the telepath, or the telepath must have had telepathic contact with the target in the path. If the telepath has had previous contact with the target, and the target is not visible, then he may try to telepathically search for him. This costs one Power point per round of search, plus 1 point per mile or fraction thereof searched away from the telepath. If the telepath rolls equal to or less than his Telepathy skill roll, he has contacted the desired target.

Empathy – A character with empathy (known as an empath) can feel strong emotions from other people, animals, and even from inanimate objects if a strong enough aura or vibration has been impinged upon the said object. No skill roll is needed merely to pick up the fact that some strong emotion is present, but the character must make an Empathy skill roll to determine exactly what kind of emotion is being picked up. The base Empathy chance is 05% and may be increased by experience, like any other skill.

An empath can try to impress an emotion upon another living creature if he makes his skill roll. This effect will last for one round per point of POW used by the empath. The creature's POW must be overcome by the empath's POW on the resistance table, or the transmitted emotion is recognized clearly as being alien, and may be ignored by the target. Human emotions are meaningless to most creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos, and would have no effect on them. Only a single individual can be affected by this skill per melee round.

The range of this power is equal to the POW of the character. This means that an empath with a POW of 15 could not receive impressions or affect a person or creature more than 15 feet away.

Precognition – This is the ability to look into the future. If a character-seer tries to gain a view of the future, let him try to roll his POWx2 or less. A successful roll allows him a short view of something important which will affect his life, though not necessarily that of anyone else. It could be a view of an object, town, person (who may be a stranger or familiar), book, or a glimpse of some horrific monster (in which case roll for appropriate SAN loss); all at the discretion of the keeper. If the roll is missed, the psychic will have a view of clouds, mist, or something equally unexciting, but will still use up the POW necessary to use the skill at all.

Since this power can be of extreme importance, and may mess up a keeper's campaign, he should feel free to limit it in some way. For example, a precog psychic may only be able to foresee the manner of someone's death, and nothing else – so when he meets someone, he suddenly gets an impression of twisting metal, burn-

ing flesh, and broken bones. If he is clever, he may realize that the person he just encountered is due to die in a car crash. Other limiting factors are also possible, but the keeper should always be sure to keep them vague enough to be able to fit events to the precognition.

This power costs half the character's POW to use. If less POW is used, then subtract 04% from chances of success for each point less than normally required. Each use of this power exhausts the character, and he must rest both physically and mentally for at least 1D4 x 5 minutes before he is capable of exerting himself.

Retrocognition – This is the power to receive short "flashbacks" when in physical contact with an inanimate object which was somehow involved with an extremely violent or potent act; such as a murder or the casting of a spell. The psychic must successfully roll his POWx3 or less to get an impression. An unsuccessful roll gives the psychic nothing useful. Roll 1D8 on the Flashback Element Table to determine what type of information the psychic actually receives.

The keeper may wish to have the potential psychic roll only once on the above table. Then, whenever the character receives a flashback, he will always receive the same results, whether it be sight, sound, emotion, or whatever. The keeper may also wish to vary the chances for success according to how useful the character's potential reception would be. A character who can only receive smells may deserve a POW x 5 chance for success, while a character with Sight, Sound, and Emotion all three may deserve only POW x 1 or less.

Flashback Element Table

1D8	*Result*
1	Sight
2	Sound
3	Emotion
4	Smell
5	Touch
6	Roll 1D5 twice
7	Roll 1D5 three times
8	All five possible results; sight, sound, emotion, smell, and touch

If a flashback contains a SAN-blasting creature, the psychic may have to roll for SAN loss. An unsuccessful attempt at retrocognition gives the character nothing.

The cost for this power is 4 points of Power per usage. Each use takes 1D4 x 5 minutes of concentration, during which nothing else can be done. The actual flashback itself is usually quite short in length, perhaps only a second or less.

Clairvoyance – A clairvoyant can use his power in two different ways, depending upon which way the keeper decides is available to him. Lax keepers may wish to allow an investigator to use both methods.

The first method is as a kind of astral projection, in which the investigator can send his mind to any place up to several hundred miles away; getting a dim view of the area and the activity going on there. The range within which a psychic can do this is limited to his POW x 100 in miles.

The clairvoyant cannot send his mind to any spot , unless he has visitied the place, has a picture of it, or possesses an object from the locale. When all preparations are made, the investigator tries to make his Clairvoyance skill roll (base chance equal to the character's POW, rounded up to the nearest 05% increment). This skill may be increased normally by experience.

If the roll is made, the clairvoyant will get a hazy view of the desired area. If the skill roll is failed, then he will see nothing. If the clairvoyant rolls 98 or higher, then his mind cannot find its way back to his body, and he is trapped on the astral plane. To find his way back, each day, the psychic may try to roll his POW or less on 1D100. If he fails, he loses a point of POW permanently. If he succeeds, then he is reunited with his body. Once his POW reaches 0, he dies. The character's body will remain in a catatonic state until the mind returns to it, or until the character's POW is reduced to 0, when it will start to decompose. Diabolic keepers may wish to have some sort

of Monster from the Void possess a vacated body before the mind can get back.

Using this form of clairvoyance takes at least a half hour of concentration and a point of POW (regenerated normally) per hour spent on the other plane, unless the mind becomes lost, when it will cost no power to remain on the other side.

The other way in which clairvoyance can be used is to allow the psychic to become a medium, able to conduct seances to contact the dead. A roll on D100 against the character's Seance skill (starts at 05% and can increase only by experience – only certain clairvoyants can use this skill, of course) will allow the clairvoyant to contact the spirit sought. Consult the Seance Table to determine other possible effects:

Seance Table

Die roll	*Results*
1/5 skill level or less	Desired spirit contacted
Skill level or less rolled	Miscellaneous noises, rappings, and rustlings
Seance roll is a failure	No effect; power expended is wasted
96-00 rolled	Actively harmful spirit with POW of 4D10 is contacted, which will attack the investigators with (roll 1D6):

Die Roll	*Result*
1	Telekinesis
2	Empathy
3	Pyrokinesis
4	Ghostly Combat (as explained in *The Sourcebook to the 1920's)*
5	Other power, chosen by keeper
6	roll twice

The use of clairvoyance as a medium requires 1D10 points of Power, and at least an hour-long session for the seance. The contacted spirit will speak through the medium, who will remember nothing of what was said. The spirit does not have control over the medium's body, which remains in an immobile, trance-like state.

Healing Touch – This represents the faith or spirit healing which some psychics claim to be able to perform. This laying on of hands takes 10-15 minutes to perform, and the chances of success are determined by the healer's POW. Each time the healer tries to heal a person, he must roll his POW x 3 or less on 1D100 to succeed. If he succeeds, he then expends POW to heal the wound. Each point of POW expended will heal 1D3 points of damage on the injured character. If the initial POW x 3 roll is failed, then the POW is still expended for healing, but no result is seen. Healers of this sort cannot heal a wounded mind, nor restore amputated limbs, etc.

See Aura – A character with this power can, if he makes his skill roll, see the aura surrounding the body of another person or creature. This can allow the person to determine good or evil, health or disease, and possibly the mood of the person or creature under question. The aura's color will indicate the target's mood within general limits. For example, black indicates insanity or evil, red indicates high passion, lust and often has bad connotations, and gray indicates illness.

The aura of a human is never one solid color, but is a mix of various colors in a variegated mix, so a skill roll must be made for an accurate diagnosis. A failed skill roll means that the aura-seer cannot tell what the kaleidescope of colors means. A roll of 96-00 indicates that the aura-seer gets a wrong impression. Viewing of the aura of a being from the Cthulhu mythos will cause SAN loss, depending upon the being. Usually this will be the same as the loss due from viewing the being in the flesh. A human possessed by such a being would have the aura of the monster instead of himself. Invisible creatures may be seen by their auras.

The base chance to see and properly interpret an aura is 05%. This may go up by experience.

Telekinesis – This is the power to move material objects with the mind. To use this ability, Power must be expended, but it will be regained at the usual rate. Each point of Power expended will enable the psychic to lift 5 ounces or move said object up to a yard. The object will move no faster than running speed. A skill roll must also be made. The base chance for Telekinesis is equal to the character's INT, rounded up to the nearest 05%. If the skill roll is failed, the Power is expended anyway.

For example, if a telekinetic individual expended 5 points of Power, he could move up to a 20 ounce object up to a yard, or a 15 ounce (say a pound) up to two yards, etc.

Telekinesis may be used to hurl objects as weapons. In such a case, the character's chances to hit are equal to his Throw roll. A hit will do normal impact damage for the object hurled, minus 1D4.

Pyrotics – This is the ability to increase temperature and possibly start fires. Each point of Power expended will increase the temperature of one ounce of material by 50 degrees Fahrenheit. A skill roll must be made for success. A failed skill roll costs a single point of Power.

An object may not be heated up too swiftly with this ability. A pyrotic may not expend any more than 1 point of Power per round, so the material being heated will heat up at the rate of 50 degrees/round. A round is about 12 seconds. Only one skill roll needs to be made, but if the pyrotic's concentration is destroyed, the process is halted (though the unused Power is not expended).

For example, Jason Kemplerer is a pyrotic who wants to set fire to the clothes of a Bad Guy, distracting him and giving Jason a chance to escape. The ignition temperature of normal cloth is about 500 degrees. Jason is riding in a hot and stuffy railcar, with a temperature of about 100 degrees, so he only needs to raise the temperature by 400 degrees. This will cost 8 points of Power and take 8 rounds of concentration, as well as a successful skill roll. If Jason wishes to ignite more than one ounce of cloth, he must expend more Power. He decides to ignite a quarter-pound of cloth, which should set the Bad Guy's entire shirt on fire, so he spends 4 more points of Power to heat up the whole shirt.

The base chance for performing pyrotics is equal to the character's POW, rounded up to the nearest 05%. Any object being affected by a pyrotic must be visible to him.

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All the powers mentioned above can have their effect increased by willing helpers. Anyone desiring to help the psychic should join their hands in a circle with him and concentrate. Any psychic present in the circle can donate as much Power as he desires to the psychic causing the effect. Each non-psychic present may donate a single point of Power to the psychic causing the desired effect. This Power is regained normally.

Dreamers and Psychics

Those familiar with Lovecraft will be aware of his stories about dreamland and how, in a colorless world, there are few with the sensitivity and imagination to visit this alternate world where dreams and nightmares both come true.

The keeper can probably safely assume that most investigators have those qualities that can make a man into a Dreamer. It would probably be fair to make a rule to the effect that only characters with a Cthulhu Mythos score of 05% or more can enter the world of dreams. Any psychic or other occult sensitive can be permitted to enter the world of dreams without learning Cthulhu Mythos.

Naturally, just because an investigator has the potential for entering dreamland, this does not mean that he must inevitably do so. Perhaps the investigators may find some peculiar incense which, when lit, transports them to the edge of the Seven Hundred Steps to Deeper Slumber. Or perhaps the keeper will choose to allow Controlled Dreaming to be one of the various psychic abilities allowed into his campaign. □

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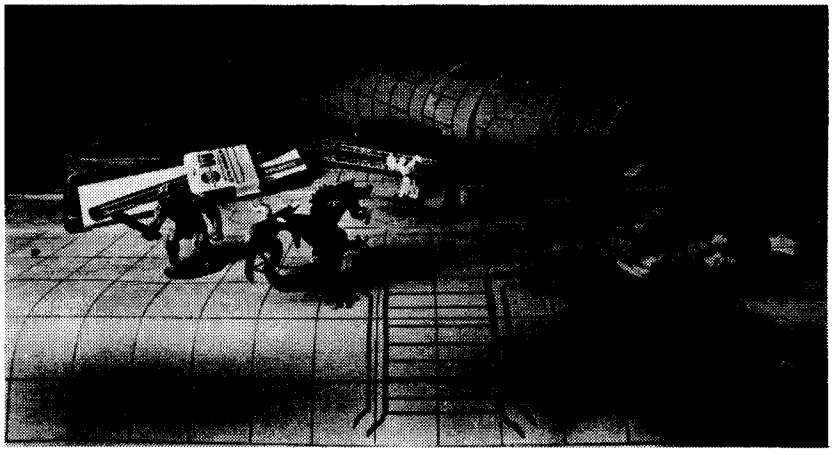

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BATTLERIDERS VS. Traveller

Battleships

by Paul Montgomery Crabaugh

Rumors are being heard about a civilian study of Imperial naval doctrine which may cause a major explosion in the Navy's methods of ship procurement.

This study was conducted by Interstellar Technical Consultants of Mora, in response to an IN request for an analysis of the relative merits of battle riders and battleships in naval policy. This has always been a difficult subject, with many partisans on both sides but no agreement. All that can be said of the ITC study is that it will undoubtedly provoke quite a reaction.

Details are not available for the most part, since much of the report is classified, but the broad outlines are now known.

The controversy surrounding the two types of capital ship has been built on one key point: that a battleship derives much of its value from the fact that it has a jump drive, for which advantage it pays a considerable cost in terms of mass that could otherwise produce energy or house weapons. A battle rider - essentially a battleship without a jump drive, delivered on target by a mother ship, which usually carries a full squadron - is more powerful, kilogram for kilogram, and frequently less expensive, as well.

Thus it is argued that a 70,000-ton battleship will always be severely handled by a 70,000-ton battle rider, which demonstrates the superiority of the battle rider concept.

The ITC study contradicts this view, labelling it "specious" and a "sophistry".

The argument is that in truth, the strategic value of a 70,000-ton battle rider is nil; it is merely a very large system defense boat. Only when it is mated with the mother ship's jump drive does it acquire strategic value. Therefore, in comparing the relative combat effectiveness of a battle rider and a battleship, the battle rider's share of the mother ship's mass should be added.

In the example being used, it is not fair to compare a 70,000-ton battle - ship to a 70,000-ton battle rider; after including the equal share of the mother ship's jump drive and fuel, the battle rider would actually be equivalent to something like a 120,000-ton battleship.

The ITC report drily notes that it comes as no surprise that a 70,000-ton battleship would be defeated by a 120,000-ton battleship.

Furthermore, the report cites other disadvantages to battleriders.

Among these is the well-known vulnerability of a battle rider squadron to the loss of its mother ship. Whole squadrons can be cut off and forced to surrender by a few well-placed shots. The mother ship cannot adequately defend itself without becoming a major warship itself, a self-defeating design philosophy. Furthermore, using the battle riders to defend the mother ship restricts them to a defensive role. Lack of iniative is to some extent rewarded, a lethal mode of thought in a naval battle.

Another disadvantage is difficulty in deploying battle riders. If an objective or mission calls for the presence of a single capital ship, or perhaps two or three, battle riders are difficult to use in such a role, because they can generally only be deployed as integral squadrons of a half-dozen or more. The only way to send a single battle rider on a mission is to send a mother ship with it. Battle riders thus must be deployed with the main battle fleets, and during times of peace, cannot be used for the "gunboat diplomacy" so often seen on the Imperial fringes.

The ITC study also claims that battle riders are, contrary to current opinion, actually *under*gunned in comparison to battleships. This rather esoteric argument relies on the fact that the number and caliber of weapons carried by a warship is determined not by available power, since there is generally enough power available for many more weapons than the ship can carry if a trade-off in maneuverability is accepted - but, by the mass, surface area and shape, and crew size of the ship involved. All other things being equal, in other words, to the sheer size.

Therefore, even though a 70,000-ton battle rider is equivalent to a 120,000-ton battleship, the battle rider is armed like a 70,000-ton battleship, not a larger one. It is exceptionally well-armed and has vast reserves of power - but it is still armed only to the scale of a ship half its equivalent size, which would ensure that a 120,000-ton battleship would be able to crush it in a starship duel.

The only way to recover the difference would be to arm the mother ship, making full use of the true size of the battle rider, not merely the small combat portion of it. However, again, arming the mother ship is self-defeating: with the weapons would have to go more power production, more powerful computers, better defenses and more acceleration, all reducing its ability to carry battle riders. The end result would be something like a carrier which carried a few extraordinarily large fighters rather than many small ones.

Although the ITC study was not commissioned to do more than compare the two design philosohies, it did include several recommendations for long-range planning of naval construction. It called for a shift to a fleet composed exclusively, or almost exclusively, of battleships and the relegation of battle riders to main fleets in quiet areas.;

It also recommended that studies be conducted into the feasibility of a hybrid sort of ship: essentially a battle rider with a limited jump capability, Jump-1 or Jump-2. It is pointed out that such a design might prove valuable. The battle riders would no longer face total defeat if their mother ship was disabled, for one thing. For another, the mother ship could in some situations not even be exposed to danger; it could be used to ferry the battle riders to within a parsec or so of the target world and let the battle riders complete the the journey under their own power. □

NORSE RELIGION

IN FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

by Patrick Amory

The idea of religion in fantasy role-playing was treated lightly from the start. In the original *D&D*, rules for religion as such did not exist, though there were clerics who supposedly were part of some organized church. In the event that the cleric's god or religion was specified, it made little difference to the play of the game: all priests had the same restrictions and set of spells. There was no encouragement to role-play worshipers of a particular religion because there were no benefits in particular.

Chivalry and Sorcery almost went to the other extreme by introducing a completely organized church based on the Church of Rome (modern Catholicism) of the Middle Ages. All the degrees of hierarchy were listed, along with their respective status and temporal powers: Popes had the ability to call for Crusades, bishops to excommunicate, etc. A very limited list of "miracles" rounded out the two pages devoted to this subject.

C&S's approach encouraged role-playing, but it did not encourage role-playing of active worshiping. *RuneQuest*, the most advanced game in this area, uses a world with a completely theological basis. In this game, role-play of worship was not only encouraged, but the character who did not worship was harmed. Complete descriptions of hierarchies, powers, spells, and ceremonies for a multitude of cults has been published.

RQ has the correct approach in focusing on religions rather than gods. *AD&D's Deities & Demigods* outlines each god as if it was a monster, complete with hit points and attribute scores. The book encourages novice *D&D* players to set the gods of the religions against parties of player characters.

In a reasonable and ultimately more interesting campaign, knowledge of the gods is encouraged, but the religion; the process of worshiping these gods, is paramount, for this is the only aspect of the deity that will normally involve player-characters.

In this article, I have chosen to deal with one pantheon dealt with in *Deities & Demigods*, and to concentrate on the religion itself. In the interest of brevity, I have provided no description of the gods, their powers, or their deeds, but will direct the reader to more complete works, such as *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, which will allow the GM to quickly find a complete description of the deity in question. A sketchy knowledge of Norse mythology is assumed in the rest of this article.

Odin, Thor, Freyr, Tyr and Loki

Norse Religion

Very little is known about the Norse religion, which makes it all the more interesting. There is no question but that it was bloody and seemed primitive. These were the gods of the ravaging Vikings.

The gods seem to have been divided into two pantheons, the Aesir, gods of war (including Odin and Thor) and the Vanir, gods of light and poetry (including Frey and Freya). The Aesir lived above the earth in Asgard, the Vanir in Vanaheim, the land of the winds, to the east. Midgard, the earth, was believed to be supported by Yggdrasil, the world-ash, in which lived the three Norns, or Fates. To the far north of Midgard was Jotunheim, land of the jotuns, or giants. The roots of the world-ash extended far below the world, all the way down to the realm of Hel, called Niflheim. Here dead souls went. In Niflheim (land of cold) Nidhogg the great dragon nibbled at the roots of the tree. Two wolves chased the sun and moon around Midgard eternally, and the Midgard Serpent coiled its vast bulk around the earth.

Customs

With the Norse world-view in mind, we can proceed to a description of religious customs. The Norse temple, or *hof*, was usually a long wooden hall, with doors in the side walls toward one end. Inside, on either side of the doors stood the *High-Seat Pillars* upon which were the *Nails of the Powers*. To carry a weapon beyond this point was sacrilege. In the inner part of the hof was another house, the most sacred part of the temple. In this inner temple stood a shrine or altar (*horg*), upon which was a gold ring without a joint, weighing two ounces, or a silver ring of twenty ounces, upon which all oaths were sworn, and which priests or priestesses wore at ceremonies. Also on the altar was the *Bowl and Twigs of Sortilege*. The bowl held the enchanted blood (*blaut-blod*) of sacrificed beasts or men, and the twigs were used to sprinkle it. The altar was of stone kept glassy with victims' blood. Men paid toll to the priest of the hof, who was in turn responsible for keeping up the building and holding ceremonies.

The priest (*godi*) or priestess (*gydja*) had the power to build temples. The one prerequisite for all temples were the Pillars (*ondvegis-sulor*) which must needs stand at the doors. Four pillars

Thor the Thunderer

were necessary, and they were precious. Nevertheless, they could belong to a layman. The priests might also have portable shrines, and always had magic talismans in bags around their necks.

Sacrifice of cattle was common, not only in routine ceremonies, but in order to receive words from the god. Sacrifice of men was normally reserved for solstice ceremonies and the like, but regularly occurred in other ways. To dedicate a new war canoe, for instance, men were tied on their backs to rollers on the beach, and the ship was pushed down the rollers, crushing the bodies of the victims, and into the sea, coating the ship's keel with blood. This was called "roller-reddening" (*hlunn-rod*) and was practiced regularly by the Vikings.

At normal ceremonies, the method of sacrifice varied. Usually the victim had his throat cut so that the blood, now holy, spurted into the sortilege bowl on the horg. Victims sacrificed to Odin were hanged: with the halter around the sacrifice's neck, the high priest inscribed Odin's rune (↑) on the victim's chest, then hang him ("hurl him toward heaven", for Odin was god of heaven). Victims of Thor were sacrificed in Doom Rings by having their backs broken on a grim stone in the center.

Sacrifices were often used to appease the gods and avert a famine or plague. The most effective sacrifices were those wherein a man sacrificed his sons, or a king his subjects. King Ani of the Swedes sacrificed his nine sons over a period of time for long life, until his subjects intervened to save the tenth, whereupon the king died (of old age). King Eric gave himself up to Odin for ten years of victory in the then-current war, a contract apparently accepted by the god.

In particular, criminals were used for sacrifice, for the only real kind of crime was the offense of a god. Private wrongs in Norse society were a matter for blood feuds, not government. Sacrifices almost invariably had done wrong, thus meeting their fate.

The final kind of sacrifice was the savage "blood-eagle" (*at-rista blod-orn*) used to right private wrongs; a private vengeance offering.

Ancestor Worship

In general, worship of the Anses, or ancestor-worship, predominated among individuals. Worship of Odin and Thor generally belonged to the tribe or kingdom and was a great national event. Private, the ancestor-cult was of major importance. Men took pride in rattling off the names of great ancestors. There were collective sacrifices to the spirits of the dead, male and female (*alfa-blot* and *disa-blot*) held every year for good harvests. There was worship conducted by the head of family at the family horg, set next to the barrows or burial mounds where the dead were supposed to dwell. In particular, during these ceremonies blood (usually of oxen) was sprinkled on the outside of the mound, and meat was left for the Elves. It was said of the dead that they "died into" such-and-such a hill, which became a barrow. When great lords or kings died, their limbs and organs were buried in various places throughout the land, giving holiness to those places through being there.

In addition, men worshiped places; holy groves, stones, rivers, and waterfalls. Holy wells were not infrequent.

Oaths

Oaths were common and important among the old Norse. The most sacred and binding oath was that taken on the holy wrist-ring on the horg, mentioned above. Men would also swear on "holy white stones", the *jarknastein*; stones boiled white hot in a bronze cauldron. Such oaths were given weight, for the man would go through great pain to make them. (He had to hold the stones during the oath.) Other oaths were made on the boar of Frey eaten at Yule (Christmastime) feasts, and over the cup of Odin at weddings. Blood-brotherhood, the blending of blood in another's veins, was extremely binding to the Norse, and one's blood-brother was almost dearer than one's natural brother. Here are the words of one oath: "May the giants take me if I lie to you, may the gallows have me wholly if I think of breach of oath!" A curse: "May the trolls take me!" A common vow was not to cut or comb one's hair or shave until a deed was done. When the task was over, one cut, combed, and shaved to signify the deed's completion.

Perhaps we have the Norseman's overall attitude toward religion and life if we note one always-binding rule: no man would prostrate himself, or even kneel, before man or god. To do so would be ultimate degradation.

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□

Tyr, God of Battlefields

Freyr, God of the Sun

Runic Calendar

The Valkyries

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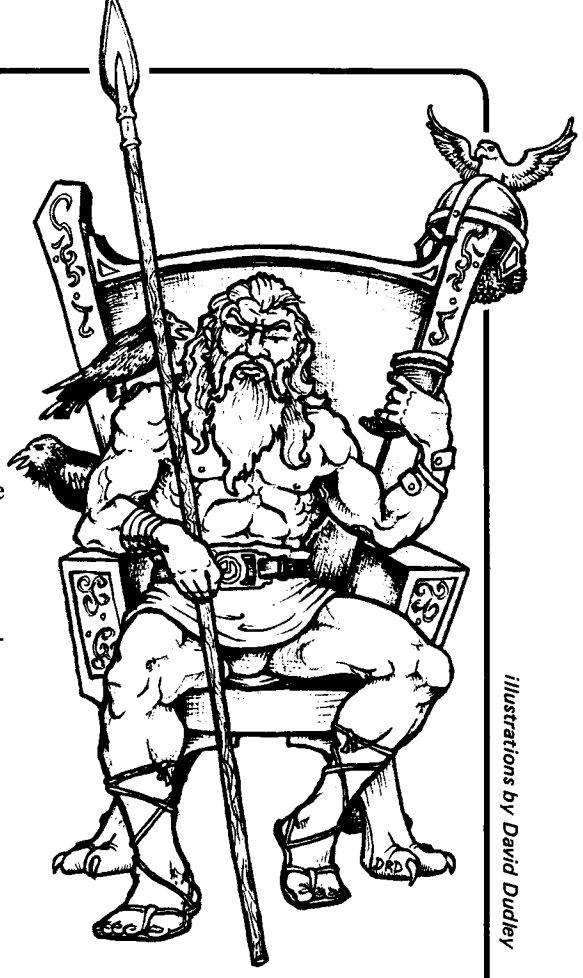


illustrations by David Dudley

The following cult description comes from Angus MacDonald's ***RuneQuest*** *role-playing campaign set in Viking Scandinavia.*

by Ulfric Halfurdanska
(aka Angus MacDonald)

MYTHOS AND HISTORY

Before Time

Odin, with his brothers Hoenir and Lodur, were brought forth from the hoarfrost of Ginnungagapp, the Yawning Void, the space between Muspelheim, Land of Fire, and Niflheim, Land of Frost, by the hornless ice-cow of Ymir the evil Jotun frostgiant. With his brothers' aide, Odin vanquished Ymir and using the slain giant's body, formed the Nine Worlds: Asgard (home of the Aesir gods), Alfheim (home of the Bright Elves), Jotunheim (home of the evil Jotun race), Midgard (our Earth), Darkalfheim (home of the Dwarfs), Muspelheim, Niflheim, and Hel (the Land of the Dead).

Since Time Began

Odin quickly became the leader of the Aesir gods who, along with the less prominent Vanir gods, brought order to the new worlds. Allfather is a good title for him as he sired many gods, including Thor the Thunderer, Tyr the Bold, and Balder the Beautiful, and created the race of Man. Nor was he recognized merely as a figurehead, for Odin's powers lay over battle, death, wisdom, madness, trade, poetry, law, and hospitality. His many names include God of Hanged Men, Lord of Hosts, Fullfiller of Wishes, the Burner, the Destroyer, War-Fetter, Giver of Freedom, and God of Cargoes. By hanging himself he gained the power of the Runes, through sacrificing his left eye he gained insight and wisdom, by drinking the Mead of Poetry he gained the power of voice and the mastery of poetry, and by drinking from Urdr's Well he gained the Sight. With it he watches over the world from his seat in Lidskjalf,and the Gate Tower of Asgard, aided by his ravens Huginn (Thought) and Muinn (Memory). He also walks all of Midgard visiting people and ofttimes entering battle astride his 8-legged horse Slepnir wielding his ever-returning spear Gungnir, and accompanied by his mighty wolves Geri (Ravener) and Freki (Greedy Eater). He is the chooser of champions, ancestor of kings, and lord of battle, yet even he is tied to the three Norns, the Weavers of Fate, who have decreed that one day Ragnarok will come and even Odin shall die in the maw of the Fenris Wolf. But this time has yet to arrive and, unlike the deities of Glorantha who are bound to Time, Odin will be forewarned, for he has the Sight and may peer through the misty veil of Time and see what is in store for himself and the worlds he has created.

Life After Death

"Wealth dies, kinsmen die, a man himself must likewise die, but word-fame never dies; that name, good or ill, lives on."

from *Havalmal* (The Words of the High One)

Those who have fallen bravely, weapon in hand, in the service of Odin, will be the lucky ones, for they shall enter Valhalla, Hall of the Fallen Heroes, whose sides are made of gold, braces and beams are spears, and roof is made of shields. There is room in the 540 rooms to house a great host and each of its hundred doors will allow eight men through abreast. In point of fact, one of the main goals of a loyal cultist is to die gloriously in battle, be cremated in a ship with his possessions, including animals and wife, and to be received into the Eternal Host, fighting ever by day, feasting at night, and awaiting the day of Ragnarok, when they may follow their true Lord into combat again. Those who die of old age or sickness go to the Halls of Waiting in cold Hel, but those of evil repute are forever banished to Niflheim, Land of Eternal Frost.

Runic Associations

To the Norse, the Runes come from Odin and he has all their power, but in *RuneQuest* terms he would be identified with Death, Spirit, Mastery, and Truth.

NATURE OF THE CULT

Reason for Continued Existence

Odin Allfather is to the Norse what Waha the Butcher is to the tribes of Prax: he is the teacher of all skills of importance to nobles and the creator of the social order. The cult insures perpetuation of this order.

Social/Political Position

The cult of Odin is the cult of kings, priests, and heroes; the nobility of Nordic society. As every noble male is at least a lay member of this cult, the social position of the cult is unshakable. In a land where life is often short and brutal, the cult shows how a man must gain his own position in life and must prove himself worthy of it by might of arm and strength of will.

Particular Likes and Dislikes

To the Odin worshiper, honor, loyalty, and glory are everything and eter-

nal frost awaits he whose spirit is weak. Loyalty first to one's word, and then to one's family, friends, clan, lord, and king is the most important trait of the cultist. To break an oath or to turn traitor usually leaves one with two possible outcomes: death (if you are lucky) or banishment and disownment by one's family and friends. In the cruel northlands this was equivalent to a slow death and damnation to Niflheim. Cult members never retreat from combat unless definitely outclassed, for death in battle is something to look forward to.

Poets and singers are also highly regarded, as are generous men, for many a norseman would like to be remembered as one who gave with both hands. Elves are held with superstitious awe, and Dwarfs, while respected for their craftsmanship, are generally not trusted. The Jotun races (i.e., trolls and giants) are the true enemies of Odin, for they are to be his foes at Ragnarok. The great heroes are those who help rid Midgard of this menace. Odin cultists do not maintain close cult-oriented alliances because survival of the fittest is more important to them.

ORGANIZATION

Inter-Cult Organization

There is none to speak of, though Priests recognize the oldest Priest at a gathering as their leader of the hour.

Intra-Cult Organization

Almost none exists, for there is no true congregation. A Priest holds only such sway over his clan as his charisma and personal powers allow. In the eyes of Odin, it is better to go and fight valiantly, give generously, and die bravely than it is to worship him.

Centers of Power and Holy Places

While there is no particular center of power in this world, there are many places considered to be holy to Odin: large battlefields, the end of the Bifrost Bridge (i.e., the rainbow), certain oak groves, and places of regular sacrifice. Aside from battlefields, which are merely temporal places, true worshipers can count on added protection (POW) on these holy grounds, as Odin and his minions are bound to notice their doings.

Holy Days and High Holy Days

Mid-week (Wednesday – Wodenstag –Odin's Day), roughly equivalent to Windsday in Glorantha, is the holy day of the cult, though Odin, ever a practical god, demands little time of his worshipers. He prefers victims of combat to pious prayers.

Threre are three high holy days each year: in mid-winter (roughly New Year's Day on the modern calendar, of Windsday/Deathweek/Stormseason in Glorantha), in mid-spring (Easter or Deathweek/Seaseason), and late fall (Halloween or Truthweek/Earthseason). At these times major sacrifices of goats, volunteers, prisoners of war, criminals, gold, and weapons are made to Odin, followed by huge drinking festivals. Every nine years for the four days before and four days after the mid-winter festival, the high holy day becomes an orgy of blood and mead with the forests groaning under the weight of hanging bodies.

LAY MEMBERSHIP

Requirements to Join

Only human males may worship Odin, though membership is given freely to all those old enough to hold a spear.

Requirements to Belong

From the *Havalmal* we find the basic requirements and manners of action:

Be a friend to your friend, match gift with gift; meet smiles with smiles and lies with dissimulation.

Your friend's friends shall be your friends: your friend's foes shall be your foes. Tread down the path to your friend's house and don't let it grow over with weeds.

Always keep your door open to the tired traveler. The man who comes to your door with shivering knees needs a place by the fire, dry clothes and warm food.

When you enter the house of a stranger, look into cupboards and dark corners and around doors to see if a foe might be hiding. Then take the seat offered you and listen more than you speak, for then they will not notice how little you know.

There is no better load a man may carry than much common sense; no worse a load than too much drink.

Never part with your weapons when out in the fields; you never know when you will need your spear.

No need to give too much; a little can buy much thanks; with half a loaf of bread and a tilted jug I have often won a friend.

The halt can ride, the handless can herd, the deaf can fight with spirit; a blind man is better than a corpse on a pyre – the dead serve only Odin.

Praise no day until evening, no wife until buried, no sword until blooded, no maiden until bedded, no ice until crossed, no mead until drunk.

A lay member is expected to bring at least one sacrifice a year, such as a goat; come to the call of his sworn lord when called; and never break his sworn word of honor.

Mundane Benefits

The lay member's lord will provide him with food, shelter, clothing, a spear, a shield, a cap, and a knife. If not sworn to a lord (king, jarl, or chieftain), the local priest will provide for him. All booty gained is given to the lord, who will then give back what he thinks the worshiper deserves.

Skills

Lay members are trained free of charge up to 25% in any of the following skills: Any Axe, Sword, Spear, or Self Bow, Shield attack and parry, Jump, Swim, Track, Row, Sail.

The following skills can be paid for in cash or kind: Speak Other Language, Oratory, Climb, Hide Item, Listen, Spot Hidden, Camouflage, Hide in Cover, Move Quietly, all other weapons, First Aid, Play Instrument, Bargain, Act, Disguise, Knot Tying, Carpentry, Shipwright, Carve Wood.

The following skills cost double normal prices: Evaluate Treasure, Navigation.

The following skills are prohibited to any cult member: Read/Write Any Language, Pick Pocket, Set/Disarm Trap, Lock Picking.

The following skills are unique to the cult: Saga Telling, Sing, Poetry, Law, Genealogy, Brew, Ski-bowing, Skiing

Skiing *Cost 100/500/1000/EXP Base Chance 05%:* Similar to the Ride skill.

Saga Telling, Sing, Poetry
Cost 500/1000/3000/EXP
Base Chance 15%: These skills all use the Oratory skill bonus. While many people can sing, come up with a story, or even create a poem, the ability to do it well or come up with something on the spur of the moment is something else again. A successful skill use denotes a fairly good rendition of whatever is being played, while a failure indicates a mediocre performance. A fumble means that the player hit sour notes, forgot important sections, or insulted the listeners. A critical roll denotes a truly exceptional performance, calling for gifts on the part of the listeners. If a critical roll is made while composing a new song, poem, or story, the piece will become a classic, at least for a few years.

Brew *Cost 100/200/500/EXP*
Base Chance 05%: This Knowledge skill is an art. A fumble indicates a very poor batch, and critical rolls mean truly memorable and tasty, not to mention potent, brews were created. Failed rolls mean mediocre brew, and successes mean okay brew. This skill may be used for beer, mead, or ale.

Law *Cost 400/800/2000/4000*
Base Chance 10%: This Knowledge skill cannot be increased through experience, but only through study. Different levels of Law give one different abilities:

01-10%: Knows what is basically right and wrong.

11-30%: Knows punishment and weregilds for major crimes (murder and treason) and minor crimes (theft of household items, etc.)

31-50%: Knowledge of punishment for middle crimes, such as rape, cowardice, not going to war, etc.

51-80%: Knowledge of appropriate statues and ability to judge ambiguous cases (man sworn to two lords, murder vs. manslaughter, laws for priests and berserks, etc.)

81-00%: Lawspeaker. Has sworn mighty oaths to Odin to protect the laws as they have been set down. Has the final word in all cases, unless there is a Lawspeaker with more seniority present.

Genealogy *Cost 400/800/1600/2400*
Base Chance 10%: This Knowledge skill only improves through study, not experience.

01-10%: Knowledge of immediate family ties.

11-30%: Knowledge of extended family; all direct relationships within the clan.

31-50%: Knowledge of oath-ties and blood-brotherhood ties.

51-80%: Knows family tree and its connections back to the founding father.

81-00%: Given time, can find the relationship between any two given people, assuming one exists, whether through alliances, feuds, indirect ties, and so on.

Battle Magic

The following is a guidline to spells taught by Odin's priests.

Free: Bladesharp 1, Demoralize

Reduced: Bladesharp 2+, Mobility, Speedart, Strength, Vigor, Fanaticism

Increased: Darkwall, Glamour, Fireblade, Firearrow, Mindspeech, Healing, Xenohealing

Prohibited: Detect Detection, Detect Undead, Detect Traps, Harmonize, Invisibility

Special:

Free Bonds: *3-point spell, Range 60m, Instantaneous, passive, permanent, unfocused. Cost: 2300 L*

This spell will untie knots, loosen cords, break locks, etc., on one bond holding a person.

INITIATE MEMBERSHIP

Requirements for Initiation

The prospective initiate must have 75% skill with two weapons, shield, and one non-combative skill. He must have proved himself brave in combat, steadfast in loyalty, true to his word, and fair in giving. In addition a questioning session by a priest will take place, abstracted here as (CHA+STR) divided by 2, times 5 or less on D100. An extra 05% is added to chances for success for each major sacrificial object or victim brought forth at the time of initiation. If the candidate fails, he must wait until the next high holy day to try again.

Mundane Benefits

In addition to the lay benefits, the initiate can expect a sword or an axe and a heavy leather hauberk with soft leather arms, even if he already has these items, as a sign of the added trust and responsibility coming with his new standing. Initiates may well receive officer or helmsman positions on raiding ships and they will receive a larger share of any spoils. This is the minimum rank necessary for notice by Odin and the Valkyries for possible placement in Valhalla.

Skills

Increased Cost: Read/Write Futhark

The Futhark are the Norse runes. To learn these, one must have an INT of 15 or more, a POW of 15 or more and spend double usual time necessary to learn to read and write. Without using this skill, many Rune spells cannot be cast.

Spells

As for lay members, though Skaldic Rune spells can be obtained on a one-use basis.

RUNE LORD (EINHERJAR)

General Statement

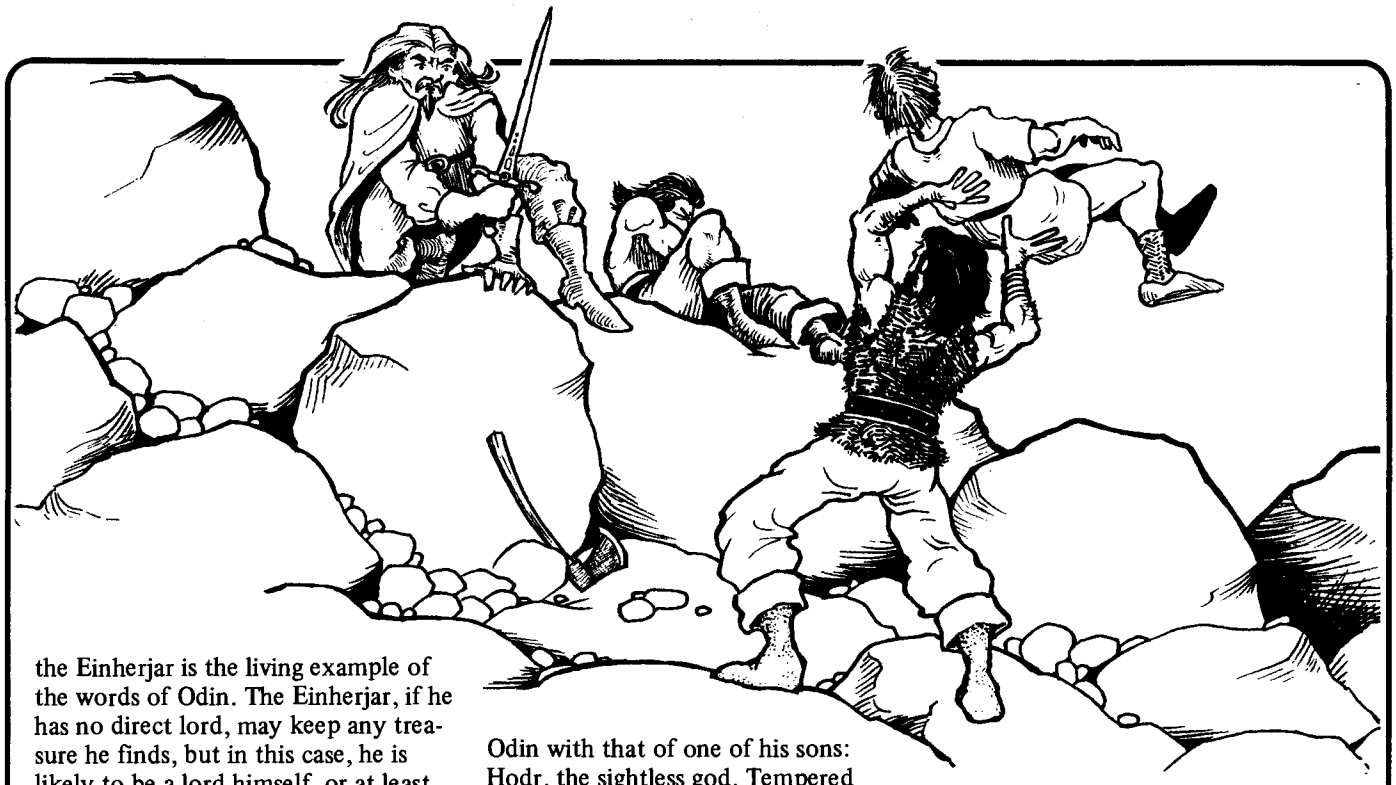
This first aspect of the Rune lord is equivalent to the aspect of Odin as God of Kings (Mastery Rune). The Einherjar is the ultimate warrior-leader, lord, and consummate defender. Though the berserk is more feared, and (disputably) the better fighter, without the leadership of the Einherjar, the social system of Midgard would fall into a shambles.

Requirements for Acceptance

The basic requirements for the prospective Einherjar are to possess a POW 15+, STR 12+, and CON 12+. He must also have five skills at 90% or more, and these must include spear attack, another weapon attack, and shield attack or parry. The other two skills can be any skills from the following: Oratory, Navigation, another weapon attack, Law, Poetry, or Genealogy. Finally, a test must be taken, abstracted here as (POW+CHA) divided by 2, times 5 or less on D100. The character's Oratory divided by 5 may be added to his chances for success.

Restrictions

First and foremost, the words of the High One must be followed, for



the Einherjar is the living example of the words of Odin. The Einherjar, if he has no direct lord, may keep any treasure he finds, but in this case, he is likely to be a lord himself, or at least to have a retinue, and he must care for the welfare of his followers and their families. An Einherjar may be arrogant and haughty, but must always be generous.

Benefits

The Einherjar receives all the standard benefits of Rune lord status, though iron weapons have no special properties in Midgard. His allied spirit will reside in his favorite weapon. The new Einherjar will gain a chainmail hauberk with sleeves, a broadsword, a composite helm, and a golden arm ring worth 600L. If the Einherjar is of noble blood, he may press a claim on the lordship of a clan, jarldom, or kingdom. If not of royal lineage or if he has no desire to press a claim, the Einherjar can expect a position of honor and importance in his lord's retinue as a leader of the bodyguard, officer in the Royal Huscarls, captain of a warboat, the lord's fo'c'sl man, or maybe even the lord's personal standard bearer. After the lord, the Einherhar has first choice of goods from booty. In all cases, the Einherjar commands and deserves respect.

RUNE LORD (BERSERK)

General Statement

This aspect of the Rune lord corresponds to Odin as God of Death. While the Einherjar are truly temporal Rune lords of Odin Allfather alone, the Berserks combine the ways of Odin with that of one of his sons: Hodr, the sightless god. Tempered (slightly) by Odin's sense of honor and duty, the berserks tread the path of blind rage and blind devotion to god. Berserks are not wholly of this world, and are already half-way to Valhalla.

Requirements for Acceptance

The prospective berserk must first have a sponsor from within the Brotherhood who will vouchsafe his honor and bravery. To qualify, the prospect must have a POW, STR, and CON all of 15 or more. Weaklings are not tolerated in the Brotherhood. The character must have 90% skills in spear, two other weapons, and shield attack or parry, as well as mastery of one more skill from among the following: Climb, Jump, Move Quietly, Track, or Acrobatics. In addition, he must know Bladesharp 1 and Fanaticism 1. Finally, he must pass a test abstracted as (POW+CON+STR)/3 times 5 or less on D100, plus 05% to success chances for each sponsor the character has. If he passes, the new berserk goes into the wilds with his main sponsor for a month to learn the cult secrets, including shapeshifting and Beast Speech. If the new candidate fails to pass the acceptance test, and is found lacking, then he must run for his life.

Restrictions

Though respected as warriors, all berserks are considered to be dangerous madmen (some more so than others). For community protection, the berserks receive farmsteads far from the others, join other members of the Brotherhood in isolated, purely berserk communities, or become homeless wanderers. Berserks may not increase in any non-weapons skills past 100%, but may increase indefinitely in weapons skills. Only the following skills may be increased in through either experience or training after becoming a berserk: Oratory, Climb, Jump, Listen, Spot Hidden, Hide in Cover, Move Quietly, Swim, Track, Ski, and all weapons skills. All other skills may never increase past the point at which they were when he became a berserk, though if his characteristic bonus increases, they may improve slightly. An allied spirit is gained which may be placed in a weapon, wolf, raven, or arm ring. As fanatical followers of the lord of the Aesir, berserks may wear no armor other than animal hides, trusting in Odin to save or take them according to his whim. Divine Intervention is not available to a berserk.

Benefits

Though the restrictions are heavy, the benefits of being a berserk compensate to some extent. After initiation, he receives three new weapons of his choice and, as a gift from the Fulfiller of Desires, a ring which exactly resembles Draupnir (Odin's own ring). No man may charge a berserk with manslaughter or murder, as his war-hand is guided by Odin, and who

would be so daring as to challenge the Mad God himself? As usual, the berserk can increase all weapon attacks beyond 100% and may split such attacks. The ability of berserks to communicate with the animals in their own tongue is legendary, and learning Beast Speech is taught free of charge to all members of the Brotherhood in half the normal time. The Berserk also has access to two abilities setting him apart from ordinary warriors. The first is access to the Rune spell Berserker, and the other is the ability to change into bear form in combat. Quite often these gifts are used simultaneously. The Rune spell is regained as for normal Rune magic, but the berserk cannot sacrifice for Rune magic. This spell is a gift from the god.

Berserker *2-point spell, Duration 15 minutes, Range self only, reusable non-stackable*

This is the same as the Storm Bull spell from the Chaosium product *Cults of Prax*. However, instead of giving extra benefits vs. chaos, the character gains Countermagic 4 and hits twice as well vs. trolls, giants, and other members of the Jotun race.

Shapeshifting

It takes a full turn to shift into bear form. When shifted, the character undergoes the following changes: STR is doubled (even past species max); 6 is added to SIZ; INT is multiplied by 2/3 (round fractions down); move increases to 10, and he gains a 1 point skin. He may attack with claw as per Fist attack, doing 1D6 + damage bonus; he may Bite with an initial base chance of 25%, doing 1D10 + damage bonus; and he may Hug his foes as per his Grapple attack, doing twice his damage bonus to the victim.

When in bear form, the berserk is immune to weapons that do not have magical spells cast upon them. The berserk cannot be incapacitated, unless he is hit in the head, which produces normal unconsciousness. If a limb is ruined, it is unusable, but he can continue to fight. While in bear form, Spot Hidden, Hide in Cover, and Move Quietly skills are all multiplied by 1½. The berserk must remain as a bear for a number of turns equal to his CON.

The berserk owes obedience only to his god and no lord holds sway over where he may or may not go, or what he may or may not do. Where there is fighting, the berserk is.

RUNE PRIEST (SKALDS)

General Statement

Just as there are two forms of Rune lord in the cult (Einherjar and Berserk), there are two forms of Rune priests, one roughly corresponding to a sane, earthly form, and the other to a mad, otherworldly type. The first aspect is the Skald, who represents Odin the All-Knowing (Truth Rune). This sort of priest is much more common than his counterpart, the seer. Skalds act as bearers of news and tellers of sagas.

Requirements for Acceptance

As with the berserks, the skalds are part of an exclusive Brotherhood and sponsorship is necessary before one can be considered as a candidate. The requirements for becoming a skald differ from those of a normal priest. They need only have a POW of 15 or more, but must also have a CHA of 15 or more. He must also have five 90% skills, of which at least one must come from Saga Telling, Sing, or Poetry, one must come from Law, Play Instrument, or Genealogy, and any others can come from any of the foregoing skills or from one of the following: any weapon attack, Map Making, Evaluate Treasure, Speak Other Language, Oratory, Act, or Disguise.

The skald must have served as an initiate of Einherjar for at least a year, and must pass a test of rolling (POW + CHA)/2 time 5 or less on D100. He may add 1/5 of his Saga Telling, Poetry, Law, or Genealogy skill to his chances for success, whichever is highest.

Restrictions

Skalds have fewer restrictions than true Rune priests, since they are not such a thing. They must keep their word at all times, perform whenever requested to do so by their lord or someone of high rank, serve as lawspeakers when needed, and provide for spiritual needs in the absence of a seer, such as when on raids.

Benefits

Skalds are traveling messengers and are Odin's voice on raids, and so are expected to stay in good shape. They

may only train in any DEX based skill up to DEXx5%, but if they already had a skill above that level, it may remain there, though not improve. An individual skald has the option of being attached to a particular lord or of wandering as the fancy takes him. In either case, he is fed, clothed, and sheltered. The traditional allied spirit is gained, which will reside in either a harp, staff, or bird. In addition, he may purchase the following skills from other members of the Brotherhood of Skalds at half normal price: Speak Other Language, Oratory, Genealogy, Sing, Poetry, Saga Telling, Law, and Play Instrument.

Rune spell compatibility

Skalds have access to only a few spells, and can only have them as a reusable spell if their POW is 18+. These spells are: Divination, Extension I, II, and III, Spell Teaching, and Morale (see *Cults of Prax*). The skald has access to Rune lord-type Divine Intervention. They also have access to some other Rune spells through associated cults.

RUNE PRIEST (SEERS OF ODIN)

General Statement

This is the final aspect of Odin, as the God of Prophecy (Spirit Rune). The seers are a mysterious, mystic, and slightly mad group, not so much interested in increasing the holdings of their master as merely reaffirming the all-encompassing presence of Odin One-Eye. Seers have no congregation, no special place of worship, except for rare sacred oak groves, and seem to wield little direct power. However, they can counsel those whom they feel are deserving, and this counsel comes with the wisdom of Odin, a powerful aid.

Requirements for Acceptance

The priest is a select group, and the candidate must be sponsored by a current seer. Three separate seers must certify before an assembly of seers that the candidate is fit to follow the way of the seer, and that he has followed the dictates of All-Father. He must also have a POW of 18+, and must write the Futhark at 50% or more. He must have been an initiate, Einherjar, and/or Skald for at least five years. He must then take a test abstracted as (POW+CHA)/2 times 5 or less on D100. +1% is added to chances for success for each year over 5 spent as a skald or Einherjar.

Restrictions

As with most priests, the seers of Odin are limited in DEX-based skills to DEXx5%. All skills above this level when the seerhood is attained drop to that level, and skills below this level may not be increased. Seers are somewhat like shamans and share some of their limitations, such as the inability to increase any characteristic but POW or CHA. If, though Divination, the Sight, or a dream, someone known to the priest is mentioned, the priest must seek out and tell the person of this vision. A priest may never lie, but he may be purposely vague. He must preside over sacrifices, feasts, marriages, see that leaders follow the way of heroes, and make sure that at all times the power of the All-Father is felt.

Benefit

By law, a seer is unstrikable. Any who would attack a priest is outcast and becomes an open target, both to physical retribution, and, worse, the dying curse of the seer, which is delivered with the force of all POW in this world and the next. Though a seer cannot return from the dead, and does not have a fetch, he does have the shamanistic abilities of store POW in the spirit plane, curing disease by laying on hands, and controlling spirits. Another advantage is that they serve only Odin and no temporal lords can command them. A seer may come and go as he sees fit. They are treated with deference, awe, and respect, mixed with a healthy dose of fear, and may demand whatever they wish for their services.

Rune Spell Compatibility

In addition to those spells available to skalds, seers may cast the following Rune spells using the Futhark. The number in brackets after each spell represents the necessary skill level in Read and Write Futhark Runes which the seer must have before casting the spell: Absorption (70), Summon Small Sylph or Undine (50), Summon Medium Sylph or Undine (65), Dismiss Small or Medium Elemental (60), Divine Intervention (50), Matrix Creation (90), Mind Link (40), Multispell I, II, or III (50), Shield (60), Spirit Block (60), Warding (80), and Reflection (50).

Cult Special Rune Spells

Crack *1-point spell, range 160m, duration instantaneous, reusable, stackable*

This spell is exactly the same as the Thed spell of the same name in *Cults of Terror*, a Chaosium game supplement.

Detect Truth *1-point spell, range 25m, duration 15 minutes, reusable, non-stackable*

This spell allows the caster to tell whether anyone within a 25m radius is intentionally lying. If lies are spoken, the mouths of the transgressors will appear to drip with honey, visible to all seers and skalds.

Truespear *1-spear, range 160m, duration 15 minutes, reusable, non-stackable*

Doubles damage done by any javelin, dart, or spear held by the recipient of the spell, up to the maximum damage the weapon can do. A pike will not do more than 13 points of damage, a javelin no more than 10 points, etc. This will not increase damage due to Bladesharp spells or damage bonuses. It has no effect on a Firebladed arm.

The Sight *2-point spell, range self, duration variable, reusable, non-stackable*

This is one of the most important gifts attainable from All-Father. This spell works like Divination in the sense that a question may be asked from Odin, but the question can deal with future events. A sacrifice of some sort is required, such as goat, gold, weapons, or even a man. Generally, the more important the question is, the more important the sacrifice must be. The answer will come in the form of a vision, dream, or a bit of obscure verse, but it will not appear immediately, though it will presented at least an hour or two before the time that has been asked about. The question must be written in eddic verse while spoken, so the priest must know Read/Write Futhark and Poetry at

50% or more each. To see if the signs are read correctly, a roll of (INT+POW) x 2% or less on D100 is needed. Failure indicates that the game master should make up some misleading sign for the priest to misinterpret.

Speak With Dead *2-point spell, range 10m, duration 15 minutes, reusable, non-stackable.*

With this spell the seer may converse with a recently dead person (no more than a single week). Runes must be carved or drawn on the body, so Read/Write Futhark at 90% minimum is needed. The dead person will not be different from his living personality, so if he refused to answer a question when alive, he will most likely refuse it after death, and if he didn't know something when living, he probably still won't kjnow it. There is a chance equal to the POW of the corpse (that is, the POW of his spirit) that he will have a new insight into some question. This chance is doubled if he was a sacrificial victim to Odin.

Example: Gormr the seer wants to know why a battle occurring two days ago began. He questions the corpse of Hrut Hlfdan, a dead guardsman, who informs Gormr that his lord has sworn to attack the other jarl for stealing away one of his horses. Hrut had a POW of 12, so that is his chance of knowing some special information that Hrut did not know when alive. This spell may not be used more than once per corpse. If the body is that of an ex-player-character, then that player is expected to continue to play that character's role.

War Fetter *3-point spell, range 160m, duration 15 minutes, reusable, stackable*

With this spell, a warrior may be immobilized. It may be cast at any individual who is armed and armored, and if the target's POW is overcome, he is unable to move or defend himself in any way, though he can speak. If this spell is stacked, more than one warrior can be immobilized at the same time.

SUBSERVIENT CULTS

Spirit of Reprisal

This cult has and needs no spirit of reprisal, for no punishment can be worse in the rugged northern climes than ostracism by clan and family. If any man truly transgresses the will of Odin, he will receive aid from no man, and the berserks will take it as their personal responsibility to rid Midgard of this spawn of the Jotums. Of course, the offender will lose all his special cult spells. Unless he can find shelter abroad, or with the Jotun, he cannot escape his doom, as the skalds will assure that one and all hear the tale of his treachery, adding horrible details in the name of poetic license.

Hodr

Hodr, son of Odin and Frigg, is the sightless god of battle. It is from Hodr that the cult receives the battlemagic spell of Fanaticism and the Rune spell (available only to berserks) of Berserker. Hodr, through the trickery of Loki, killed Balder the beautiful with a sprig of mistletoe.

Frigg

The wife of the Lord of Hosts and goddess of all womanly virtues, Frigg was far gentler and less mysterious than her fickle husband. Besides demonstrating to women their place in Norse society as housekeepers and urgers-on of the men, and as esteemed counselors, Frigg teaches the followers of her lord and husband the skill of First Aid and the Rune spell of Comfort Song, which is the same as the Chalana Arroy spell of Heal Body, just as described in *Cults of Prax.*

Bragi

Bragi, another of Odin's famous children, is the smiling god of poets and story tellers. Those following him are happy and laughing, have mouths full of honey, and have a marked love of mead. Poetry, singing, storytelling, and playing instruments are all taught by his cult, and he also provides a useful Skaldic Rune spell.

Command Audience *1-point spell, range 25m, duration length of performance, reusable, non-stackable*

By using this spell, a skald can force someone to listen to him. For the length of the song, story, poem, tale, or message, all within the 25m radius will listen to what he has to say, though this does not guarantee a favorable response. This spell is generally used in delivering important messages or when a noisy host refuses to listen.

Heimdal

Guardian of the flaming Bifrost Bridge, otherwise known as the rainbow which connects Asgard to Midgard, grim Heimdal must be ever on guard against assaults by the dread forces of the Jotun. This son of Odin provides the battlemagic spells of Farsee and Detect Enemies to Odin's worshipers, as well as a Rune spell which may be cast by seers only.

Vigilance *2-point spell, range 160m, duration 1 day, reusable, non-stackable.*

When placed on a person, he will not require sleep, rest, or food for 24 hours. This spell combines the battlemagic spells of Farsee and Detect enemies as well. If it is used more than once per week on a single person, he must roll his CONx3 or less or fall into a coma for 48 hours.

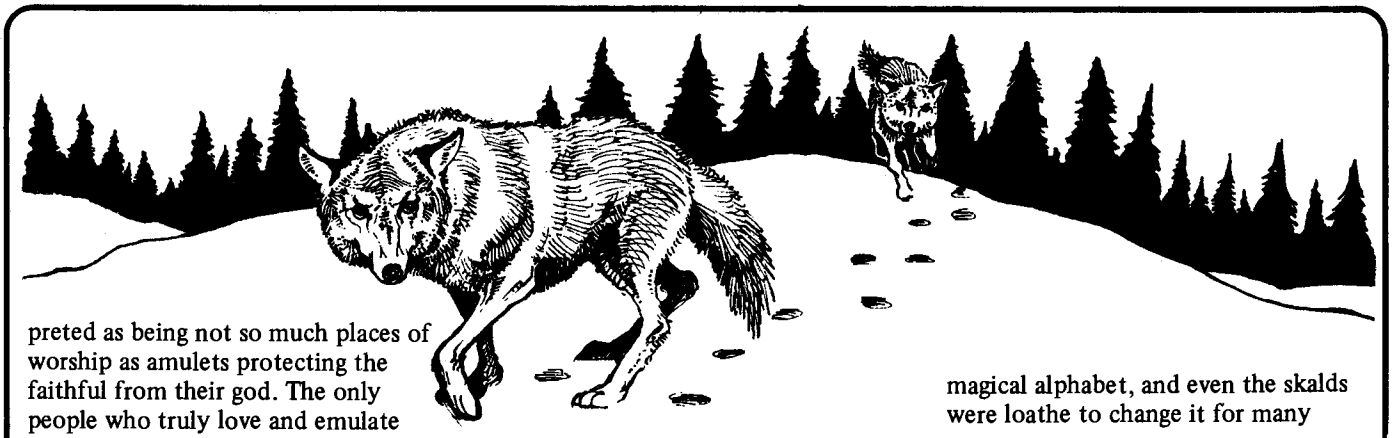
Valkyries

The Choosers of Fallen Heroes. In Midgard, these fierce battlemaidens are normally invisible, but if you see a beautiful spear-wielding lady by your side in combat, you will win glory in battle that day, though you are sure to die. Your reward is all that a man (or at least a Norseman) could ask for a place in Valhalla with a beautiful woman to wait on you when you're done practicing with weapons for the day.

NOTES

Odin's Relationships with his Worshipers

Odin is a fierce, powerful, and knowledgeable deity who often walks among his people. He often disguises himself as an old man or wandering begger to test the courage, generosity, and truthfulness of the faithful. Yet, for all his generosity, Odin is a god to be feared and respected, not loved. Rarely will one of his worshipers cry, "Odin, give me strength!" He is more likely to call out, "Odin, bring fear and horror to mine enemies!" One example of what people thought of Odin can be found in his name, which can be translated as Spirit, Ecstasy, Madness, Intoxicating, Raging, Furious, and One Who Brings Madness. As can be seen, he is not a noble father-figure such as Zeus, but an insane warrior and soothsayer. In this light, the altars in his honor can be inter-



preted as being not so much places of worship as amulets protecting the faithful from their god. The only people who truly love and emulate Odin are the berserks and the mad seers of Odin – the lunatic fringe.

Ragnarok or Bust

Just how realistic, in the sense of Nordic mythology, is the concept of Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods? Since the oldest testament of Viking belief, *The Elder (or Poetic) Edda*, wasn't written down until the early 12th century, at least 100 years after the end of the Viking era proper, and even longer after the general conversion of the whole of Scandinavia to Christianity, one must wonder if the idea of the death of these pagan gods isn't an invention of early churchmen to explain the position of their new God in the tenth world, Gimle, the High Heaven. But, while Gimle is easily explained away and dismissed, Ragnarok is not. If Balder, and later Hodr, could die, and these deaths be integral parts of the Norse mythos, why not other gods? And what other reason is there for Odin to be gathering the greatest warriors under one roof, totally at his disposal? In this light, Ragnarok seems to be, at least to the Norse mind, a distinct inevitability, though as far removed from the present time as Judgment Day is to most Christians. It is the doom of the gods, but not something to worry about, for, as Odin himself states in the *Havalmal*, "It's an unwise man who sits awake worrying at night. When the morning comes he will be too tired to think and matters will be still more muddled."

The Norsemen as Barbarians

The Vikings inspire in the minds of most gamers a picture of horn-helmeted, battle-crazed warriors who rape, plunder, and cause general mayhem and destruction with a mild candy coating. While it would be silly to deny the general savagery of the Viking raids, it is equally silly to consider them as nothing but bloodthirsty uncouth barbarians. To begin with, the Vikings never considered themselves to be barbaric. Unlike Conan and his comic-book ilk, most Norsemen thought of themselves as being highly civilized, and you need only study their shipcrafting, wood carving, poetic styles, and metal working to see where this idea springs from. Nor did they sneer at their "effeminate" southern neighbors, as story-book northerners are apt to do. In fact, in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the monks were incensed by the manner in which the Danes (Norsemen) were tempting away their good Saxon (English) women by coming their hair, taking baths each week, and using perfume to hide offensive odors. The Norse were far from lawless, and killing a man other than in war or authorized duel was not only frowned upon, but demanded major compensation in the form of weregild, banishment, or outlawry. The Vikings were also traders, bringing goods from their homes to be traded in England, France, Germany, the Baltic lands, Russia, and far Byzantium, where Scandinavian amber was worth its weight in gold. The Varangian Guardsmen, the personal bodyguards of the Emperors of Byzantium, were axe-wielding Norsemen. Yes, the early Scandinavians were pirates, mercenaries, and invaders, but they were also explorers, traders, and craftsmen.

The Futhark Runes

These are the common or Danish runes, one of the many variations of the Futhark, which derives its name from the values of the first six symbols. As can be seen, there are many letters used in Norse names, such as J, O, and D, that are not even represented, and yet this was a powerful magical alphabet, and even the skalds were loathe to change it for many generations. When later runes were added, none had any magical properties. Odin found these sixteen runes and no more: all others are mere imitations.

The Futhark Runes

f u th ä r k h n

i a s t b m l R

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THE UNDEAD OF

The warriors were picking their way through the cold black depths of the barrow. Only the flickering torchlight illuminated the greed in their eyes as they probed deeper and deeper into the burial chamber. There was red gold there and shining cups, nestled amongst bright hand-woven war-byrnies and grim battleswords. And it was all there for the gathering .... For there were no guards, "naught but undead ..." the old hag above had shrieked before their battleaxes had sent her down the road to Hel. There was no such thing. No "undead" as the witch had put it. Dead men did not walk, it said in the book of laws handed down from on high. "Undead are not a part of the

By Laurence J. P. Gillespie

Norse undead occupy a strange position in the role-playing world. Unlike their troll and berserk brethren, they have not been perverted by role-playing game (RPG) designers so much as ignored. They seem to have been out of the room when the first FRPer was handing out hit dice. At least, one looks in vain for them on most encounter tables.

They have not been without influence on fantasy games, however. The barrow wights of *Dungeons & Dragons* and its variants, at least, owe something to Norse folklore, albeit folklore transmitted via *The Lord of the Rings*. And there are monsters in other games (such as the trolls of *RuneQuest*) that would be quite at home in a viking grave.

All the same, an influence is not a presence. As it is, Norse undead possess an enormous potential as yet untapped by role-playing games. This article endeavors to release some of that potential.

There is a lot more to Norse undead than the power to drain life levels. Sagas and folktales tell of them swimming through solid rock, breathing fire, or even invading dreams. Norse undead are also endowed with considerable shapeshifting powers, with changes into trolls, dragons, and even walruses reported. Others have second sight, the power to see hidden or invisible things. Some are immune to normal edged weapons, a few are known spell-casters, and a couple are even noted as poets.

Though these may seem to be more powers than any monster deserves, Norse undead have compensating limitations. If these limitations are worked into a coherent campaign rationale, they will be an excellent test of player skill.

Two things are needed to achieve this. The first is a suitable cultural context in one's campaign. Norse undead really should not be used in isolation. They are most effective and believable in worlds which feature other aspects of Old Norse culture, such as its burial customs, its superstitions, and its view of the afterlife.

illustrations by Brad W. Foster

NORSE FOLKLORE

Nordic mythos,"[1] it said. And they believed. And they trusted. If there was naught but undead, there was indeed nothing at all.

The creaking noise caught them all by surprise. The gold's glittering invitation was ignored as everyone scrambled for the exit a few yards away. One almost made it to open air and sun. But then he, like the others, was ripped by the talons, torn by the teeth, and dragged down to doom with the rest. If he was lucky, he never even saw the eyes. And if he was able to say anything, it was probably a curse on ***Swords and Sorcerers*** *and every other work that says ... "Undead are not a part of the Nordic mythos ..."*

To get this suitable cultural context, the GM will need at least a loose familiarity with the folklore behind the monster.

The term "undead" as FRPers use it can be applied to a wide range of Norse monsters. This reflects the limitations of the English language more than anything else, because the vikings had several terms of their own for ghosts, quite specific meaning (as far as we can tell). Unfortunately, we are no longer able to reproduce these nuances in English, due either to the limitations of our own vocabulary, or because we no longer know what these nuances were. As it is, though, if one defines "undead as something dead which nonetheless possesses many of the powers of the living (such as motion, volition, speech, intelligence, etc) it is clear that some sagas and folktales place virtually all non-humans in this category (i.e., elves are undead, as are dragons, trolls, rock-dwellers, dwarfs, fairies, seal-people, etc, not to mention a host of other things our language just doesn't have the words for). Even giants, who seem so human in many stories, inhabit the world of the undead in others. When Ragnarok comes, the legions of Hel will be the giants' main ally in the struggle that will destroy the whole world (though it is not certain the dead are meant here).

The actual appearance of undead varies widely in the sagas. Almost always, however, they are solid corporeal creatures, in stark contrast to the ghosts featured in many more recent folklores. Usually it is the undecayed corpse itself, bloated to abnormal proportions, which haunts the pages of the sagas. Often such a corpse possesses enormous mass, which is a surefire giveaway if you suspect its undead nature. Moving this mass around takes a lot of strength, too. That's why most Norse undead have "heljar-afl": the strength of Hel.

To the Norse, undead came in their own special colors. His words for these colors are suitably macabre: "hel-blar" – "black as death" or "na-folr" – "corpse-pale." Even a living man could acquire this color if he were fey (doomed to die), or had lost all his luck. Even associating with corpses could impart the color to the living.

1 – Simbalist, E. E. and Ives, W. *Swords & Sorcerers* (New York, Fantasy Games Unlimited, 1978), page 20

No one who has seen them can ever forget undead eyes. They are usually enormous, which reflects the desperate hunger of all undead. Even their best polymorphs cannot hide this, so it is something to watch for. Even a dark elf's eye would appear small beside that of an undead.

ROLE-PLAYING UNDEAD

Well, so much for appearances. As it is, the success of your Norse undead will depend not so much on how you describe them as on the way you role-play them.

Basically, there are two types of undead prevalent in the family sagas. The first is known as the "haugbui," which means "barrow-dweller, grave-mound inhabitant." The haugbui generally stays in his barrow or close to it, buarding the treasure buried inside. He won't bother you unless you bother him, normally. "Bothering him" usually means trying to steal his treasure, though sometimes the mere violation of his territory will cause the haugbui to attack.

"Draugar," the second main class of Norse undead, are very similar to the haugbui. Unlike the haugbui, however, they have nothing against raiding farms, riding houses, and attacking lonely travelers. Their motivations for this seem rather obscure. Cannibalism and livestock plundering are presumably a function of their tremendous hunger, but house riding? One shouldn't knock it until one's tried it, I guess.

There is a little evidence that Norse undead are affected by some sort of astronomical cycle. In *Grettir's Saga*, for example, it is noted that undead activity increases as one approaches the winter solstice, and often dwindles to nothing by midsummer. Many interesting explanations have been postulated for this. The simplest I've seen is that undead are more active on long nights because they have more time. The reason for their total absence around midsummer could be that the sun hardly goes down in Iceland (the source of virtually all our information about Norse undead) around that time of the year.

Consequently, the Christmas season is one of the worst time of the year for undead attacks (since it encompasses the winter solstice and the pagan Yule period which may originally have been one and the same).

Undead are most active at night, and more often than not avoid the light of day. There are accounts of undead walking during the day, though, so this is not an infallible rule. If they walk in the day, though, undead, like orcs, prefer heavily overcast skies or times when the shadows are still quite long or are growing longer. Failing that, undead may take their darkness with them, casting murk and mist spells wherever they wish to go.

A wide range of powers is credited to undead in the sagas, though no one power is credited to all of them. Probably the best way to handle this is to use a table of random powers such as the one included here, much as *RuneQuest* does for its creatures of chaos.

When undead are encountered, simply roll two dice, one after the other. The first die roll tells you what master number on the table to refer to, and the second gives you the specific power. For example, if one rolled a 3 and then a 5, that would give your undead power 3/5: the power to swim through solid rock.

The role of undead in the broader realm of Norse shapeshifting folklore is really a question beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that saga coverage of the phenomenon is confused and inconsistent, possibly because it may have been recorded by writers who no longer knew the basis for the folk belief in the first place. Shifts to dragons, seals, and even living humans have been recorded in sagas and folktales. Other sources suggest that undead pass through stages of being trolls, dragons, etc (see, for example, the case of Bui in *The Saga of the Jomsvikings*, who posthumously turned himself into a dragon to protect his stolen gold).

How undead develop is not entirely clear. In some cases, usually those of exceptionally evil people, the process seems to begin even before death.

Though the sagas have little of the silliness found in some *D&D* worlds, where some people actually try to get turned into wights, vampires, and the like for the extra powers this gets them, there are cases of great leaders burying themselves alive (see *Heimskringla, Egil's Saga*) with stockpiles of provisions, weapons, and so on. Does this have anything to do with going undead? We cannot say. Though there is nothing in the sagas which specifically states that such and such caused a person to become undead, it is clear that certain conditions are more suited to the formation of undead than others. These include: being slain at night, being doomed and knowing it (fey), dying violently, having one's corpse reflected on glass or water, being a berserk, wizard, or other supernatural type, having one's corpse desecrated, being extremely evil, lying unburied, having one's death originally brought about by undead or other monsters, etc.

Those who enjoy role-playing vikings should take the above into consideration the next time they send someone to visit Othinn (Odin). In particular, don't kill people at night if there is any way to avoid it. Most warriors in the sagas took this taboo very seriously indeed. Leaving slain foes to the crows is also very risky. The dead are prone to wander about at large if they lack a grave they can call home. Worst of all, though, is desecration of the corpse. There are folktales in which the sole reason for a draugar haunting was his unhappiness with the treatment of his remains.

As it is, even animals can go undead if the proper ritual is not observed in slaughtering them. And, though the idea of a zombie duck, chicken, or goat may seem funny, don't underestimate it. One of the most terrifying monsters in Icelandic-Canadian folklore was not a dragon or troll, but "Thorgeir's bull," an improperly slaughtered animal that terrorized an entire district for many years.

With Norse undead, an ounce of prevention is worth a gallon of holy water. What's more, prevention is normally just a matter of keeping the taboos listed above. Prevent conditions favorable to the generation of undead and you will prevent the undead, usually. It's as simple as that.

Even if you have no control over the circumstances of death (the main contributing factor in most undead outbreaks) you can still discourage the development of the monster. At the very least, build the grave strong enough to keep the draugar trapped inside. Failing that, find some way to immobilize them. *Gisli's Saga*, for example, tells of a huge stone being used to anchor a dead man's burial ship in place. Many other Norse burial customs were probably designed to pre-

vent undead monsters from forming, though the function behind them is no longer clear to us. Even the custom of cremation so popular in the "Age of Burning," as Snorri calls it, was probably originally simply designed to destroy the bodies of prospective draugar.

The pervasiveness of the curse of the undead should not be underestimated, however. Even the ashes of burned draugar can transmit it. In the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, for example, a cow ingesting draugar ash passes this curse on to its next calf. This calf grows into a monster bull which wreaks great destruction.

Undead outbreaks can be extremely contagious. This is because people killed by undead tend to become undead themselves. Add to this all the undead farm animals and things can get pretty hairy. *Grettir's Saga* and *Eyrbyggja Saga* contain interesting accounts of entire valleys being devastated by undead.

Assuming you've failed to prevent undead, your next and most viable course of action is to repel them. By and large, games like *D&D* and *Warlock* have simulated this problem quite well. There, as in the later sagas and folktales, by far the most effective repellers of undead are catholic-type clerics. Just about all the traditional *D&D* gimmicks, i.e., crosses, holy water, etc. work well in the folktales, too.

The question of pagan clerics vs. undead is a little more complex, partially because we know so little about Norse pagan clerics (if such things existed at all). Though Othinn has been cited as "undead competent" by one noted APA writer, this competence was of an entirely different order from that of a Christian cleric. In the Eddic poems, Othinn clearly has the power to speak with the dead, at least. Since his informants (dead witches) seem to speak involuntarily, it appears Othinn also has some coercive power over them. This power has its limits, though. More often than not, the ghost Othinn raises breaks off communications right at the most crucial point in the interrogation (cf. *Voluspa* and *Baldrs Draumr)*. Othinn is also known as "Lord of the Dead" and "god of the hanged." His runes can force hanged men to come down and talk to him. For all his spells, though, he seems to have had scant power to repel undead. At least, there is no reference to it in any of the sources available today.

Most other Norse gods seem to have been equally useless against undead, with the possible exception of Thor. Though there is little evidence for it in the sagas, a symbol called the sign (or hammer) of Thor was referred to in post-reformation Icelandic witch trials. This sign, much like a swastika but with curved prongs, was credited with the power to repel evil. Since undead were one of the greatest fears of post-reformation Iceland, this symbol was probably thought to work against them. Thor was invoked to hallow pagan graves, as well, but we do not know whether this was to keep undead in or grave-breakers out.

Icelandic folklore gave many things the power to repel undead in addition to those used in *D&D*. Church bells, for example, stop undead cold. Recent attendance at mass, or partaking of Holy Communion makes one inedible to, if not highly repulsive to undead, trolls, and the like. The most powerful saga item I've seen would have to be St. Olaf's Candle, though. To all appearances the stub of a cheap medieval taper, when lit (either manually or by mental command) it repels undead. In my *D&D* campaign, I allow it to work like a twelfth-level cleric for 1-6 turns.

An even better defense against undead is to associate with someone of great holiness, such as King Olaf the Saint himself. King Olaf's luck or aura was so strong that he could extend it to his employees, even if said employee was thousands of miles away at the time. There are cases on record of undead and trolls publicly stating that they could not attack a particular person because he was under the protection of King Olaf.

If you don't work for King Olaf, you are still entitled to call for his help or intervention. In return, one should promise to do a major act of good. In many sagas, for example, a favorite promise in dire straits was to make a pilgrimage to Rome (see the account of the battle of Clontarf in *Njal's Saga* for a good one). This works best, needless to say, if you are a Christian, or at least seriously considering becoming one.

Unrepentant pagans really don't have anyone quite like King Olaf for dealing with undead. The closest substitute is to invoke the spirit of a dead ancestor, preferably one who was a good fighter. If you luck out, he may personally intervene. The most famous of these was a long-dead warrios named Bard Snaefellsass (whose last name roughly translates as "spirit of snow mountain"). It's possible his services were available to the general public, but no record survives of this.

The most successful defense against undead you're likely to see anywhere

came in chapter 50 of *Eyrbyggja Saga*. There, court injunctions are used to stop them, believe it or not. The ghosts in question, two whole gangs of them in fact, are hit with a summons for trespassing and malicious vandalism. After a brief hearing, the human plaintiffs obtain a court injunction banning all further hauntings. Admittedly, the ghosts so banned seem to have been pretty tame by Norse revenant standards. Their most memorable crime was a gigantic mud fight staged right in someone's living room. Whether this would work on more malignant forms of undead is anyone's guess. In any case, considerable legal skill may be required to pull off this sort of defense, as otherwise the ghosts could tie you up for months in appeals. (For those tired of holier-than-thou clerics, a snappy lawyer may be just the alternative on the next dungeon expedition.)

By now, I suppose all the red-blooded FRPers out there are saying, "Fine, fine, but how do we fight them?" In brief, as if they were trolls, with magic weapons, blunt instruments, or your bare hands (but only if you are very srong). Once the draugar has been incapacitated, cut off his head and jump between it and the body before the latter has fallen to the ground. Some traditions say it is necessary to walk widdershins (counterclockwise) three times between the body and the head. Others require one to place the draugar's severed head under his seat or feet. Then, if possible, burn the corpse and bury the ashes far from areas of habitation or dump them offshore in spots where they won't pose a menace to navigation. Then pray a lot. (In other words, treat them like radioactive waste or nerve gas canisters.)

What happens if you don't comply with the above? No one really knows. The regularity with which these rituals are followed in the sagas, though, suggests complete regeneration of the undead or worse. Since undead are tough enough to beat the first time around, one clearly has a vested interest in ensuring that they don't come back for an encore.

UNDEAD MISCELLANY

Were undead ever thought of as good guys? At the risk of offending all those undead fans out there, I must admit I don't think so. To be fair, though, a case can be made for the existence of some kind of friendly neighborhood undead in certain Norse traditions. Ancestor worship is mentioned in several sagas, as is the concept of people carrying on some sort of normal existence in the grave, posthumously. At times, it seems undead could even be helpful. In some parts of pagan Scandinavia, people sacrificed to grave mounds for peace and good harvests. *Flateyjarbok's* rendition of Olaf Tryggvason's saga contains an account of a skald who was given his poetic talent by a mound-dweller. Other saga heroes go to grave mounds for advice. Thus, there may have been a time when undead were not regarded with the horror and fear they call to mind today. If so, they've followed a pattern common in post-Conversion cultures, the reduction of an object of worship to a bogey. More than a few Viking gods can attest to the power of this phenomenon.

Unfortunately the whole subject of grave mounds and barrows is really beyond the scope of this article. If Norse undead interest you, though, you will find it worth your while to examine them more closely. As it is, attitudes towards them in the sagas vary widely. In some, such as that of Hervor, barrows evoke the same sort of terror one finds in *The Lord of the Rings*. Elsewhere things are not so clear cut. Kings are frequently found sitting on barrows in the sagas and poems. Archaeological evidence also suggests that many barrows had chairs or assembly places on top of them. In some stories, people even sleep on them at night.

Even the most benevolent of barrows, though, had formidable defense mechanisms against would-be grave-robbers. Illusions were especially popular, but it is not always clear whether these were cast by the barrow itself or by the draugar inside it. In post-medieval folktales, the importance of silence while robbing the barrow is particularly stressed. One word during the process and you lost the treasure and sometimes more. Many grave mounds were also sealed with powerful banespells. Ask Beowulf some time if you want proof.

Last, but not least, barrows are a favorite resting place for dragons. We don't really know why, though it does support the theory that draugar turn into dragons at some stage.

Norse undead also have links with the power of speech and poetry that are absent in most FRP counterparts. While this is not to criticize the terrible silence of undead in most games, viking fanatics may find it worth their while to at least experiment with more vocal forms of the beast. If nothing else, it gives a good excuse to invite bards to visit barrows for poetic inspiration and new spells. Draugar gold can also impart speech to the dumb, if touched to the roots of the tongue. Why? Again, nobody knows. Othinn's being both god of poetry (euphemized skalds notwithstanding) and death probably has something to do with it though.

Tangling with undead brings bad luck, even when one seemingly defeats them. The most spectacular demon-

stration of this is found in *Grettir's Saga* where the draugar-defeating hero forever loses the ability to advance in power. (Or, increase in skills or experience levels, if you like.)

Even before a corpse becomes "undead," it can emanate powerful evil-eye spells. Its smell can drive the impulsive and hot-tempered totally insane (see *Flateyjarbok* iii, 446).

Even in post-medieval times, elaborate precautions were taken to prevent any chance of a corpse returning to the world of the living. Right up to the last century, homes in parts of Europe were still built with "lich-doors." These doors were used for one thing only: the carrying out of people who had died on the premises. At all other times, such doors were sealed. In North American funerals even today, the deceased is generally born out feet-first. This originally had the same purpose as "lich-doors", to keep the dead from retracing a path home.

Undead were widely regarded as omniscient, as the possessors of secret knowledge too potent for ordinary men. Even Othinn, one of the wisest beings in the Norse pantheon, turned to them for information. Practically everything we know about Ragnarok, for example, came from the mouths of dead witches forced to talk by Othinn's spells. In late and post-medieval Icelandic folktales, just about all great magical knowledge is gained from the dead (see various stories about the magical tome "Grayskin" for instance). This has interesting parallels in Old English tradition too. The Anglor-Saxon word for sorcerer, *helrun*, literally means "one who knows the secrets of the dead."

SCENARIOS WITH UNDEAD

The following scenarios are included for those wishing to put Norse undead into their fantasy campaigns.

The biggest obstacle to getting one's players to interact with undead is bringing them into their habitat. By and large, undead function best in and around barrows. Getting players to visit barrows, though it may not be easy, will enable the undead to work under optimum conditions. The scenarios below are designed to overcome that obstacle.

By far the easiest and most obvious way to get players to visit barrows is to place something they need in one. If one's players are as scared of undead as they should be, this should be something quite special. On my world, a favorite is the ancient family enchanted sword, buried in the barrow of a grandfather. The mission: simply open the grave-mound and go down to get it. The key here lies in the characterization of the hagbui. If you want a typical *D&D* game, make it 100% malicious. A more benevolent characterization may produce more sophisticated scenarios. Maybe some of the mound-dwellers are malicious and some aren't. Maybe they'll allow the player to take the sword, provided he doesn't go for the magic armor as well. Maybe the sword is cursed, and the draugar will warn him against taking it.

Try to relate the barrow item to the personality of the undead, if possible. This entails more than having the corpse of a warlock guard magic items and famed warriors guard their swords. What caused the mound-dweller's original demise? Are there any living targets for his revenge? Is he amenable to negotiation?

Another angle is to create dissent among the undead. In one famous Norse story, which resembles a similar story about fairies in England, two rival factions of undead, one red, one black, are fighting a tremendous war in their barrow. It has gone on every night for a hundred years, because both sides will rise again fresh and free of wounds the next evening. One night, while a player-character rides by or sleeps near this barrow, a draugar seizes him and drags him under. To gain his freedom, he must fight at the draugars' side, for the undead will not regenerate from wounds inflicted by the blade of a living Christian (or whatever faith is applicable). After the battle, the player-character is sent packing with a fistful of barrow-gold and a story no one will believe.

For real heroes, I especially recommend: the players have been enjoying the hospitality of a great northern lord. He is a king renowned for his goodness and his antipathy to evil sorcery. It is Yuletide, the worst time for undead attacks. As the court is just getting into the swing of the festivities, a man strides into the hall. He is tall and evil-looking, with dark skin and flashing eyes, a black beard and a broad nose. He has a full set of arms and armor and wears fine things of gold. He strides arrogantly right up to the king's high-seat, a gross breach of protocol. Everyone is petrified. He stands before the king in silence for a time, then says, "I came thinking I would be offered hospitality by such great and noble men. I shall be much more open-handed than ye, for I shall offer possession of the fine things I bear to any man merely coming to fetch them."

At that, he walks out, leaving a tremendous stench in his wake. Some revelers lose consciousness or even die. All but the mightiest are helpless for hours. When the hall has been put back in order, though the party has been damped, an old holy man speaks. He has recognized the visitor as King Raknar of Helluland, from the far side of the Ginnungagap Sea (Norse term for the waters west of Greenland). He buried himself alive years ago, in a burial mound with 500 living men and an enormous quantity of treasure.

To avenge this slight to his honor, your host is prepared to equip a complete expedition to visit Raknar. Will the players lead?

RANDOM POWERS FOR UNDEAD

Roll 1D6	*Powers*
1-2	1) Charm humans 2) Stink (all in immediate area must resist or flee in disgust) 3) Aura of fear 4) Emanates confusion to its enemies 5) Can destroy minds of those it encounters (as Feeblemind in *D&D* or INT loss in other games) 6) Can fire magical missiles at no loss in power. (as Magic Missile in *D&D* or Disruption with no Power loss in *RuneQuest* – equivalent attacks in other systems)
3-4	1) Immune to normal edged weapons 2) Can raise mist and vapors 3) Can create darkness 4) Raises wind 5) The power to swim through solid rock 6) Second sight: can see hidden or invisible things
5-6	1) Reanimation (if proper anti-undead procedures are not applied the monster will return to "life") 2) Reanimation (as above) 3) Geas power 4) Geas power 5) Shapeshifting 6) Shapeshifting

Undead in the Sagas

Though it would take years to read all of the sagas which mention undead, most of the relevant lore is contained in the works below:

Eyrbyggja Saga, Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards, trans. – Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1973 (especially worth reading for the data on the legal status of ghosts in Old Norse society)

Howard the Halt, William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson, trans – London, Bernard Quatrich, 1891

Grettir's Saga, Denton Fox and Hermann Palsson, trans. – Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1973 (a fresh and unexpurgated translation of the saga of Iceland's most famous undead-fighter)

Interesting descriptions of Norse seances can be found in:

The Faroe-Islanders Saga, George Johnston, trans. – Oberon Press, Canada, 1975

The Vinland Saga, Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson, trans. – Penguin Books 1965

If all the gruesome tales above get to you, stories of friendly undead can be found in:

Gongu-Hrolf's Saga, Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards, trans. – Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980 □

Second Ed. D&D

Uniform Experience Point System

Illustration by Patrick Jenkins

By John T. Sapienza, Jr.

Advancement of characters to higher levels of skills in their professions is measured in experience points (XP) in *D&D*. This is of fundamental importance to the design of the game as a whole because the rate of progression in the combat rules and the magic rules is keyed to steps of progression in the XP rules. This was not completely understood at first, for in the original rules clerics were given faster progression on the combat tables at high levels than fighters by mistake, because of irregularities in the fighter XP scale (a problem that was fixed in the *AD&D* tules by modifying both the XP scales and the combat system). The point is that every part of the rules is interdependent on other parts of the rules.

The second edition of *D&D* modified the original XP scales until they amounted to an almost uniform scale of progression. The only major exceptions to uniformity of progression are the thief's starting with odd numbers rounded up at medium levels to match the rest of the system, and the failure of the thief, dwarf, and elf scales to maintain numerical progression to match the other scales. The fighter scale also is rounded down too far to match the underlying system.

I would like to suggest a uniform system of XP scales, both to change existing scales to maintain proper spacing between classes, and to allow for future expansion of *D&D* by adding new character classes to the second edition rules from those that existed in the first edition rules but were not included in the *Basic* or *Expert* volumes. The reason that the scales need to be uniform lies in the nature of the combat system in *D&D*, which uses a standard combat table for all character classes, and differentiates between classes by requiring different numbers of levels to be gained in order to advance to the next line on the combat table. The table is divided into advancement levels giving roughly +2 to hit per line of advancement. I will refer to these "levels of advancement" as Combat Classes to distinguish them from experience levels, since each Combat Class (CC) is several experience levels. For a fighter, each CC gain requires an increase of three experience levels, while for a cleric or thief, the same CC gain requires an increase of four experience levels, and a magic user will need to increase by five levels.

The need for uniformity in XP scales was shown by the problem in the first edition cited earlier, in which clerics reached CC5 and CC6 sooner than fighters did, when fighters were obviously intended to progress faster in combat skills than any other class. There was a similar problem with thieves at high level passing the fighters. Because the combat system is keyed to groups of levels for progression, it is essential that the rate of progression is kept properly spaced, as the designers intended. But, this is not limited to combat. For example, as new character classes are added that can use magical spells, it is important that their rate in progression in acquiring new spells be matched to their closest equivalent basic character class (whether that be magic-user or cleric) to make sure the new class receives no unfair advantages. If the XP scale for the new class is different from that of

the basic class, then that scale ought to parallel the basic scale exactly so that the difference in XP is maintained relative to the basic class in the same proportion at all levels.

This uniformity of progression is shown in the Uniform XP Table. Up to sixth level, most of the system should be self-explanatory, since the scales are evenly spaced and double in amount each level from second to sixth. After that, the increase needed for each new level changes from a simple doubling system to an increase by an added increment. The figure needed for reaching sixth level is added to itself for seventh level. For eighthlevel, you add the figure for sixth level twice to the amount for seventh level. For ninth level, you add the figure for sixth level three times to the amount for eighth level. For example, the increment betwee levels for a cleric is +25 for L7, +50 for L8, +75 for L9, +100 for L10, and so on.

Why? Because there is a fundamental imbalance in the rate of progression for high-level characters. The present XP scales in 2nd edition *D&D* take a character up through ever-increasing difficulty to reach L8. That is, it is twice as hard to reach each higher level until you reach L8, when the cost for each new level is exactly what it cost you to reach L8. But your ability does not freeze then – in fact, for every new level gained you become more powerful, gain additional hit points, and move onward in resistance on the saving throw table for your class.

The underlying theory behind the doubling scale for L1 to L8 was that each level ought to be difficult to reach, and that the rate of progression ought to be a curve in which low levels were reached quickly, medium levels more slowly, and high levels very slowly indeed. But the shift in XP cost from increasing each level to being the same amount each level above L8 destroys that progression curve. Matters are worse than they appear, for not only is it no longer more difficult to reach higher levels after L8, it actually becomes easier! A set number of experience points is handed out for every monster of a given hit dice that you overpower, or for every gold piece you find. The higher the level of th character, especially magic-users, the easier it is to kill off opposition in quantity. A L20 magic-user can wipe out a platoon of Superhero (L8) pirates that a L10 magic-user might have trouble with, both using a Fireball spell. Yet, it cost the first magic-user the same number of XP to reach L20 from L19 that it cost the second to reach L10 from L9. There is something askew here.

What went wrong? I believe that the designers recognized that they had a problem in balancing game logic with playability. The game logic could have been satisfied with XP scales that doubled every level, maintaining the same proportion all the way up. However, most players would have found the long wait between levels after around L8 intolerable, so the designers compromised and rounded off the amount of XP required for higher levels at a high number of points but did not let it continue to double. Their problem was that they did not realize that when the point value was left the same but the ability of the character increases each round, there is inflation in the rules system. For higher level, the frozen XP amounts were actually going down, not up, in practical gaming terms, because the difficulty of attaining each new level was going down as the ability of the characters was going up and up and up.

A NEW BALANCE

What I have done is to strike a new balance between character abilities and the cost of gaining still better abilities by gaining that new level. I have made no attempt to individualize the cost factor with each character class, becasue the other systems in *D&D* keyed to the XP system would by fouled up by such meddling. Instead, I have adopted a formula that applies to all classes, existing and yet to be written. The whole point to this system is to handle anything that will be created and added to *D&D* in the future, to lay a base for future construction. At the same time, the method chosen does make each new level cost more to attain than the character's present level, and this is true indefinitely, no matter how high that character rises. Yet the increases should be acceptably restrained, I believe. After all, a L15 cleric under this new system needs 1,150,000 XP. On a fully doubling scale the requirement would have been 12,800,000 XP! This system is specifically designed to allow for growth up to the projected L36 characters planned in the *Companion* volume, and raises costs just enough to make even high-level characters have to struggle to attain still higher levels.

The Uniform XP Table provides scales in between the scales for thieves, clerics, fighters, and magic users. Only one of these scales is actually used in the *Expert* volume of 2nd edition *D&D*, where the dwarf is charged a higher scale of XP to make up for the dwarf's infravision and magic-resistance. Still, this suggests future uses for the in-between scales, which is why they are printed here. I have labeled each scale with the character class from the first edition of *D&D* that I suggest should be placed there. Those of you who are familiar with *AD&D* will recognize some familiar placements, and notice some changes. Bear in mind that while the *AD&D* scales start at similar numbers for some of these, they are not uniform in progression and are not directly comparable.

The most startling part of the table is the suggestion that non-humans should be allowed into character classes reserved for humans in 2nd edition *D&D*. Although the 2nd edition places dwarfs, elves, and halflings in their own character classes, this need not be adhered to by a DM who chose to treat non-humans as different races, rather than as different functions. There is no particularly good reason, for example, why elves could not choose to give up the advantages of being simultaneously a fighter and magic user as in the 2nd edition *D&D* rules, and progress solely as a fighter or solely as a magic user, or perhaps even as a thief. Nonstandard roles such as ranger might be suitable for elves ... you get the idea. The same approach applies to dwarfs, who could be thieves or other classes, though their magic resistance makes them unsuitable as magic users. Halflings I would leave as they are, since their combination of fighter skills and the ability to fade into the countryside makes them unique as scouts for their role in gaming.

Since the nonhumans have abilities that humans lack, charging them additional XP is a reasonable compensation for game balance. The method I suggest is taken directly from one existing 2nd edition *D&D* rule, that for dwarfs, and then applying it generally to nonhumans. Thus, a dwarf, elf, or

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Uniform Experience Point Table for D&D

Experience Level	Thief	NH-Thief	Cleric	NH-Cleric	Druid Halfling	Illusionist Fighter NH-Fighter	Ranger Mage	Paladin NH-Mage	Elven/ Fighter/ Mage
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1,250	1,375	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,250	2,500	2,750	4,000
3	2,500	2,750	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	8,000
4	5,000	5,500	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000	10,000	11,000	16,000
5	10,000	11,000	12,000	14,000	16,000	18,000	20,000	22,000	32,000
6	20,000	22,000	25,000	28,000	32,000	36,000	40,000	44,000	64,000
7	40,000	44,000	50,000	56,000	64,000	72,000	80,000	88,000	128,000
8	80,000	88,000	100,000	112,000	128,000	144,000	160,000	176,000	256,000
9	140,000	154,000	175,000	196,000	224,000	252,000	280,000	308,000	448,000
10	220,000	242,000	275,000	308,000	352,000	396,000	440,000	484,000	704,000
11	320,000	352,000	400,000	448,000	512,000	576,000	640,000	704,000	1,024,000
12	440,000	484,000	550,000	616,000	704,000	792,000	880,000	968,000	1,408,000
13	580,000	638,000	725,000	812,000	928,000	1,044,000	1,160,000	1,276,000	1,856,000
14	740,000	814,000	925,000	1,036,000	1,184,000	1,332,000	1,480,000	1,628,000	2,368,000
15	920,000	1,012,000	1,150,000	1,288,000	1,472,000	1,656,000	1,840,000	2,024,000	2,944,000
16	1,120,000	1,232,000	1,400,000	1,568,000	1,792,000	2,016,000	2,240,000	2,464,000	3,584,000
17	1,340,000	1,474,000	1,675,000	1,876,000	2,144,000	2,412,000	2,680,000	2,948,000	4,288,000
18	1,580,000	1,738,000	1,975,000	2,212,000	2,528,000	2,844,000	3,160,000	3,476,000	5,056,000
19	1,840,000	2,024,000	2,300,000	2,576,000	2,944,000	3,312,000	3,680,000	4,048,000	5,888,000
20	2,120,000	2,332,000	2,650,000	2,968,000	3,392,000	3,816,000	4,240,000	4,664,000	6,784,000
21	2,420,000	2,662,000	3,025,000	3,388,000	3,872,000	4,356,000	4,840,000	5,324,000	7,744,000
22	2,740,000	3,014,000	3,425,000	3,836,000	4,384,000	4,932,000	5,480,000	6,028,000	8,768,000
23	3,080,000	3,388,000	3,850,000	4,312,000	4,928,000	5,544,000	6,160,000	6,776,000	9,856,000
24	3,440,000	3,784,000	4,300,000	4,816,000	5,504,000	6,192,000	6,880,000	7,568,000	11,008,000
25	3,820,000	4,202,000	4,775,000	5,348,000	6,112,000	6,876,000	7,640,000	8,404,000	12,224,000
26	4,220,000	4,642,000	5,275,000	5,908,000	6,752,000	7,596,000	8,440,000	9,284,000	13,504,000
27	4,640,000	5,104,000	5,800,000	6,496,000	7,424,000	8,352,000	9,280,000	10,208,000	14,848,000
28	5,080,000	5,588,000	6,350,000	7,112,000	8,128,000	9,144,000	10,160,000	11,176,000	16,256,000
29	5,540,000	6,094,000	6,925,000	7,756,000	8,864,000	9,972,000	11,080,000	12,188,000	17,728,000
30	6,020,000	6,622,000	7,525,000	8,428,000	9,632,000	10,836,000	12,040,000	13,244,000	19,264,000
31	6,520,000	7,172,000	8,150,000	9,125,000	10,432,000	11,736,000	13,040,000	14,344,000	20,864,000
32	7,040,000	7,744,000	8,800,000	9,856,000	11,264,000	12,672,000	14,080,000	15,488,000	22,528,000
33	7,580,000	8,338,000	9,475,000	10,612,000	12,128,000	13,644,000	15,160,000	16,676,000	24,256,000
34	8,140,000	8,954,000	10,175,000	11,396,000	13,024,000	14,652,000	16,280,000	17,908,000	26,048,000
35	8,720,000	9,592,000	10,900,000	12,208,000	13,952,000	15,696,000	17,440,000	19,184,000	27,904,000
36	9,320,000	10,252,000	11,650,000	13,048,000	14,912,000	16,776,000	18,640,000	20,504,000	29,824,000

whatever goes on the XP scale next higher than the one for humans of that character class. This is a rather mild extra cost compared with my suggested system in *DW 17*, and still leaves open the question whether you should apply level limits to nonhumans as the method for keeping humans superior in power to nonhumans in *D&D*. I suggest that instead of using absolute level limits that you slow down the advancement of nonhumans by not only charging them higher XP but requiring an additional level per combat class. Thus, dwarf fighters need to advance four levels instead of three to move up a line on the combat table and saving throw table, elf clerics need to advance five levels instead of two, and so forth. You might also consider slowing down the receipt of spells for nonhuman magic users from a new spell level every two levels, as it is for human mages, to a new spell level every three levels. This is shown in the Spell Table for Nonhumans. (If you do this, spells are received in the same amounts for elf fighter-magic users, but at a higher XP scale producing a slower rate of advancement.) By thus reducing the rate of power increases for nonhumans, you might be able to do away with the idea of level limits for the nonhuman races, since it is no longer necessary to preserve the human domination of the world that the *D&D* rules assume.

This is not to say that this assumption is one you are required to adopt for your personal campaign. You could allow nonhumans to progress in CC normally and gain spells at the usual rate, and still do away with level limits, if you wish to treat all races in your campaign as equals. Or, you could retain the rule that nonhumans simply stop progressing after a point.

SPELL TABLE FOR NONHUMANS

Experience Level	Spell Level 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
5	3	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
6	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
7	4	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
8	4	4	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
9	5	4	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
10	5	5	3	1	–	–	–	–	–
11	5	5	4	2	–	–	–	–	–
12	6	5	4	3	–	–	–	–	–
13	6	5	5	3	1	–	–	–	–
14	6	5	5	4	2	–	–	–	–
15	6	6	5	4	3	–	–	–	–
16	7	6	5	4	3	1	–	–	–
17	7	7	5	4	3	2	–	–	–
18	7	7	5	4	4	3	–	–	–
19	7	7	5	5	4	3	1	–	–
20	7	7	6	5	4	3	2	–	–
21	7	7	6	5	4	4	3	–	–
22	7	7	6	5	5	4	3	1	–
23	7	7	6	6	5	4	3	2	–
24	7	7	6	6	5	4	4	3	–
25	7	7	7	6	5	4	4	3	1

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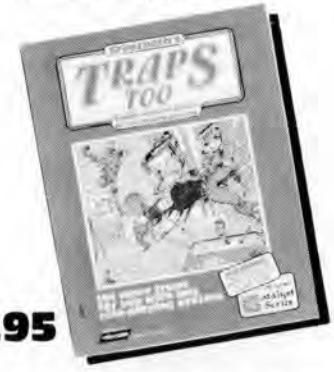

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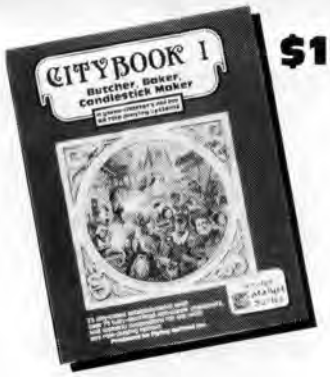

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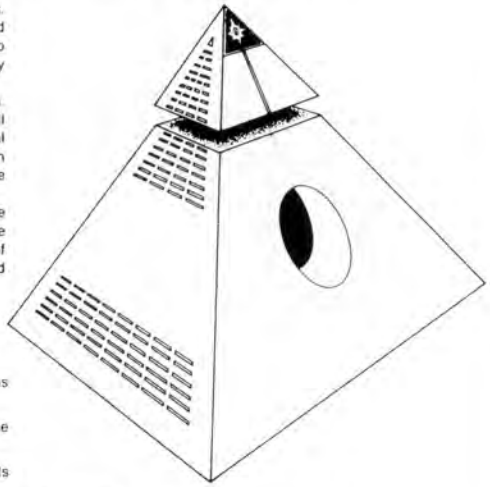

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Adventure by Design

This column is devoted to providing game mastering and scenario designing tips for gamesmasters of all types.

Because of work commitments Paul Jaquays was not able to continue to write this column. However because of the importance of this column we plan to put it together with a rotating cast of authors.

by David R. Dunham

On The Fly: Ad Lib Adventuring

It's Friday night. You promised you'd be the gamemaster (GM) this weekend, but you spent the whole week reading paperbacks and playing video games, so you didn't prepare a scenario to run. Or worse, the GM turns to you and says, "Well, that's all I have ready, but it's only midnight. Why don't you run something?" More mundanely, the player-characters venture off in the opposite direction from the one you planned for. For whatever reason, you may find yourself GMing a role-playing game without knowing what you're going to do next. What should you do?

Keep right on GMing, of course. This article will tell you a few ways to do this, as painlessly as possible (for both you and your players; if you play it right, they may never know you weren't ready for them). I'm assuming a wilderness setting, since they're better for spontaneous play, but you should be able to adopt the ideas for underground adventures.

First, it helps if you are an experienced GM. This helps you keep your cool when the players bypass the area you had mapped to the last inch and populated to the rat, in favor of the blank spot on your map. After all, this isn't the first time they've done this sort of thing to you. Experience as a GM has probably given you a knowledge of what sort of encounters may happen, and how to run them. It's bad enough to be ad-libbing, without having to worry about the details of conducting a melee.

Having players who enjoy role-playing can be useful. Running a role-playing encounter requires you to know less bothersome details (like hit points or spells known). Also, you can pass a fair bit of time with one encounter, and are thus saved from having to think up more encounters on the spur of the moment. Even better, during the encounter the players will sometimes generate mini-scenarios.

Things are generally easier if the adventure is part of a campaign. The campaign background will probably give at least a vague idea of what the players may encounter. For example, if you play *RuneQuest* in Glorantha, you and the players would not be surprised to find Rhino Riders in Prax, even though you have no idea what individual non-player-characters (NPCs) live there. If you run a campaign, rather than just isolated scenarios, just about any scenario can be supported by the campaign background, and vice versa.

If at all possible, spend a few minutes ahead of time (while players are putting ice in their glasses) putting a few ideas down on paper. I like to come up with some mission the characters will be on, providing a framework for the whole scenario. You don't need to get detailed; you'll fill in things when you get to them. What you want is a reason for the characters to be traipsing around together. You'll worry about what they'll actually do later.

It also helps to be prepared. Prepared to be unprepared, that is. You can set up a bunch of encounters ahead of time, even if you don't have a complete adventure. The "found encounter" idea used in several recent commercial scenarios is a good example of this — an encounter which can happen virtually anywhere. For instance, the characters come across a weathered stone monument. The sharp-eyed among them notice that there seem to be fresh bloodstains. If they investigate further, they notice a channel which carries the blood off too... If you're too lazy to do this much preparation (I am), you can at least make up a list of scenario or encounter ideas. No detail is required (this is just to jog your memory and/or inspire you): "stone monument" is good enough.

Okay, so you weren't even that prepared. Use commercially available play aids. Many game supplements include encounters which can happen anywhere; *Borderlands*, *Free City of Haven*, and *Enchanted Forest* come to mind — there are many others. Play aids which consist simply of prerolled statistics can come in handy, especially in games like *RuneQuest* where you need fairly detailed characteristics (for *RQ* I use *Foes*.)

You can still resort to the dreaded random encounter. Why do people dread them? Because they can be so, well, random. It doesn't make any sense to meet an army of lizard-men one hour, a group of peasant children picking flowers the next, then a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Especially if the party is in an area supposedly populated by orcs. But who says you have to listen to the dice when they produce random events like those? As GM, you're the sole interface between the players and the dice. If the dice roll up nonsense, ignore them, or keep rolling until something reasonable comes up.

Now that you've filtered out the nonsense, you still need to make some sense out of a random encounter. Your task is made easier by the fact that, when looked at on the right level, nothing is random. Taken out of context, you may have rolled a random meeting, but perhaps the event ties in with the scenario you're running, or into your campaign.

Other encounters may make sense when looked at geographically (and good encounter tables take this into account). Perhaps the dice say there's a group of four people, out in the middle of the plains. Well, why are there? Remember we need a reason for things to happen — then they aren't random. Well, those four folks are probably out hunting (not much else to do out in the plains, after all). If you meet them in a forest they might be poachers, while they'd probably be fishing if found by a river. In a mountainous region, they could be dwarves, prospecting for gold.

Some people think it's an amazing coincidence when the dice roll up events that tie beautifully into a campaign. I think it's a case of making your own luck. You've got to be a little creative at times to adapt chance encounters into a pre-existing framework without clashing against it.

So, you've accepted a random encounter, and figured out a possible reason for it happening. If the encounter's with unintelligent beings, you're in good shape. But what about sentient creatures? They tend to have personalities, after all, and that's supposed to be what role-playing is all about. Obviously you're not going to have much time to figure out their family backgrounds, ambitions, opinion of existentialism, or favorite colors. You can still give them a quick personality. Are they rowdy? Frolicsome? Aloof? Arrogant? Timid? You don't need anything complex — just a word or two to give you a rough idea of how they will react. One might even call these stereotypes, though you'll want to vary them slightly. Don't get too detailed; you are trying to keep the action flowing smoothly (and give the impression you're always in complete control of the situation), and the players may decide not to interact, or may attack. In either case, making up a complex personality is wasted time. If the players do start interacting, you can think of more personality complexities. I find I can usually come up with a personality detail about every time an NPC says something, so the players learn more about an NPC as they converse with her.

If you find that random dice rolls just don't inspire you, how about turning to your players? They may have ideas of their own about what they want to do or encounter. Feedback is very important. An enjoyable moment in an ad-libbed game I played in came when we were having a conversation with a Lunar priest. One of the players remarked,"I hope he's not a priest of the Crimson Bat!" Casting a smirk in my direction, the GM said, "Oh, by the way, you notice a small bat on his shoulder [the familiar of Crimson Bat priests]." We spent the next half hour trying not to become Bat food.

Feedback is also important in determining your timing and pacing. When everybody starts looking at their watches, yawning, and scraping the last of the dip out of the bowl using the potato chip crumbs, you would be making a mistake if you hit them with a massive attack.

I don't recommend on-the-fly adventuring on a regular basis, but I have found that it's a lot of fun. □

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REVIEWS

ALMA MATER
SPELL LAW
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ALMA MATER

By Steve Davis and Andrew Warden
Oracle Games Ltd.
$10.00
Reviewed by Ian R. Beste

What can you say about *Alma Mater,* a role-playing game that was banned at GenCon, described as setting new lows in bad taste by Gigi D'Arn, and has a warning on the back cover describing the game as not suitable for those under fourteen? Well, you can say that it is not a bad game at all, and its faults are due more to the present state of RPGs in general, rather than to any attempt at disgustingness in particular.

Alma Mater is a role-playing game set in a "typical" American (or Canadian) four-year high school. The rulesbook is professionally printed and typeset, 48 pages long, with a full-color, slightly vile, and humorous cover illuatration by Erol Otus. The rules are clearly laid out, much better than those in the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* books, and rivaling the best efforts of Game Designers' Workshop or Chaosium.

Outside of the sixteen main rules' chapters there is a table of contents, a glossary, a list of abbreviations (mercifully short) and an index. The index reduces somewhat the page-flipping caused by the ninety-seven charts and tables, numbered one through ninety-seven, that are scattered through the text. Tucked into the rulesbook at time of purchase is a combination Character Sheet/Report Card and a 22"x17" poster of the cover suitable for putting up and annoying your parents. The inside illustrations are by Erol Otus and Owen Oulton, and vary from average to mediocre. Unfortunately, most of the females shown in the illustrations have unnaturally large breasts, a rather assinine element in a lot of RPG artwork. My other major complaint about the illustrations is that they give the rulesbook a sleazy look detracting from the fact that the authors have actually done a reasonable job of writing a rules system. *(The explicit artwork is the reason for the game's ban and widespread criticism.)*

The rules begin with an introduction that states "The game is generally meant to be realistic, balanced with fun and excitement." Following, "A Few Words from the Authors" apologizes for any seeming sexism by saying "Please keep in mind that we are trying to simulate stereotypes that one sees in school." The authors also explain that they have rules covering sex and drugs because modern high school students "take a more liberal approach to these subjects." In other words, if these two topics weren't in the rules, the game wouldn't be much of a "simulation."

Following an explanation of using polygonal dice comes the "Creative Characters" chapter which explains how to roll up a character. Each imaginary student is created by a D10 roll for Strength, Coordination, Appearance, Intelligence, Learning Drive, Courage, and Willpower. An eighth characteristic, Constitution, is the sum of Strength and Willpower. Age modifies these numbers up or down.

The seven rolled characteristics, plus Sex (player's choice here) determine what character class the player-character fits into. The classes include: Average, Jock, Brain, Cheerleader, Criminal, Tough, and Loser. Character class and a die-roll determine the PC's social level which dictates weekly allowance. The player rolls to determine age, birthday, and "problems," which can be anything from obesity, glasses, or acne, to asthma, claustrophobia, or homosexuality.

"Skills" follows the chapter on character creation, and lists 31 skills all with short but adequate explanations. Each skill description includes the number of skill points necessary to go up in levels in that skill, and how skill points are gained (i.e. the more a Tough practices Intimidation, the more skill points he accumulates towards reaching a higher level of Intimidation.) Skill points are automatically awarded per successful use of the skill and are not dependent upon a die roll such as the one in the *Basic Role-Playing* games. Player-characters begin the game with three to five skills, depending upon character class, and may add more as the game progresses.

After the skills section the actual playing of *Alma Mater* is explained. The "Encounters" chapter provides sixteen tables of who (or what) can be met, and what they are carrying. Teachers (as befits a special sort of humanity) have six special skills that govern how lenient or tough they are. Logically following "Encounters" come "Reactions," for individuals, groups, teachers, animals, and even parents. The thirteen tables in this chapter make NPC reactions a little more varied and individual than the tired old "Friendly/Neutral/Hostile" list. The chapter entitled "Combat" describes a simple method for resolving fights: characters may do nothing or choose to engage in close physical combat, close weapon combat, or ranged attack. Characters choose whether they wish to attack or defend, and use their Coordination score as a base success number against which to roll. A variety of attack and defense options are given, a simple hit location system is provided, armor, healing, morale, and unconsciousness are all accounted for. Most noticeable in this chapter is a weapons table seventeen column-inches long that includes, among others: paper shredder, switchblade, apple/orange, chalk, trash can, tack, wet towel, zip-gun, and even the M-16.

Damage reduces a character's Constitution and is of two types: A, which is minor, such as being hit by a baseball, and B, which is much more serious, such as being hit by a baseball bat. Type B damage gets worse as long as the afflicted PC is unconscious, especially since unconsciousness can happen fairly quickly.

The short chapter on "Chemistry" covers four categories of explosives, corrosives, poisons, sleep-inducing agents, and poisonous gases.

These chemicals are not to be confused with "Alcohol and Drugs" which is a wholly different chapter. Drugs are rated as to potency which determines effects and recovery time. Table 74, a list of drug prices, is provided for "those who do not travel in such circles."

The "Social Rules" chapter covers a broad range of topics, progressing from dancing through flirting, dating, going steady, seduction, pregnancy, love, friendship, diseases, parties, stopping finally with bribery. The rules on party success or failure are amusingly realistic.

The chapter on "Academics" covers all those required parts of high school using rules that put a heavy burden of work upon the gamemaster (or SchoolMaster, as *AM* puts it). I recommend using the faster NPC grading system, unless players wish to continually roll to see whether they have turned in their homework assignments.

"Vehicles" covers driving and accidents, while the "Miscellaneous" chapter touches upon sleep, weather, information for both player and gamemaster, and some suggested variants. Finally, there is an example of play, a sample high school called Central High, and a scenario, "Starr's Party."

The chapter I haven't described yet is "Success" i.e. winning the game. The rules state that because high school lasts for four years in *AM* (or until forced out) players can determine whether or not they have won. Winning is determined by points and is a function of social success (being popular, going to parties, getting sports awards), academic success (good grades, academic awards) and general success (selling drugs, stealing, vandalism, all based on dollar amounts). Unless the character is a Criminal or Tough, points for General success are subtracted from the sum of the other two. The method of determining who wins has very little to do with how successfully one copes with ones' high school years in real life. The success rules in *AM* are more a reflection of how most teen-agers perceive success in high school, and have nothing to do with such real inner adolescent concerns as identity crises, rebellions against parental authority, confusions concerning the opposite sex, first experiences working, family problems, standards of right and wrong, etc. Such real problems and conflicts are either missing from the rules or are only hinted at in the numerous tables.

But *AM* should not be too severely criticized for being superficial and not much more than a somewhat realistic simulation of stereotypes. Most, if not all, RPGs deal with superficialities. Most straight fantasy RPGs stick to fighting, questing, and such stock devices. Nearly all SF games overlook the incredible potential of the future for radical social, economic, and cultural change and concentrate on space travel, laser battles, nasty aliens, and classical capitalistic economic activity. Post-holocaust games portray a dog-eat-mutant dog world and seem to ignore rational, peaceful co-operative rebuilding of civilization. Systems like *RuneQuest* and *Bushido* are more successful in touching upon realistic conflicts within a society because the rules are intertwined with the social context, *RQ* with its concern for religion and *Bushido* with its rules for honor, reputation, and karma. But *AM* is particularly open to criticism because it covers a very real *here and now* setting that its players will no doubt be familiar with. Granted that most fantasy gamers would rather role-play heroic swordsmen fighting dragons instead of tyrranical barons fighting peasants, the Church, the Black Plague, and limited technology and resources, but RPGs need some link to reality. Players of *AM* know what can be done in a real high school, and what goes on inside those who go to a real high school. *AM* covers the surface events, but not the deep causes, outside of whatever reason the players provide themselves.

One reason I suspect the *AM* player will provide will be revenge. Experienced gamers are no doubt familiar with the sort of player who is otherwise meek and mild, but goes berserk with his 18/00 Strength character, slaying all before him. Much enthusiasm for RPGs comes from the vicarious triumphs they provide. *AM* is a game custom-fit for this purpose. On page 34 of the rules, the authors state, "A large number of NPCs can be drawn from people known personally, and using them in the game can sometimes be rather entertaining." Oh yeah. Instead of wasting a big mean ol' twenty hit dice dragon, the player can waste a few Toughs or Jocks. A gamemaster could allow a PC with an Illegal Economics skill to get hold of a .357 magnum and shoot a few NPCs who strongly resemble real-life school toughs. The revenge-fantasy element could quite easily be the dominating element in a game, just as gold-grubbing and monster-slaying can dominate an FRPG. The vicarious violence both exaggerates in degree and trivializes in results real-life school hallway violence. The violence is "fun." But I suspect that many of us can remember someone from our own high school days, maybe even someone we knew personally, badly hurt or even killed perhaps in an auto accident or just "clowning" around. The graphic drawing by Erol Otus on page 23 of someone getting their throat slashed is disturbing for this reason. Certainly other games portray violence, and not too tastefully (is the *Arduin Grimoire* critical hit chart, with its "head pulped and splattered" in good taste?) but in *AM* the violence hits harder because it is ao much closer to 1982 hometown USA (or Canada) than *AD&D, Arduin, RQ, Traveller,* or the make-believe worlds of *Champions* or *Top Secret.*

As for the sex in *AM,* I for one am tired of RPGs that ignore the sexual side of human beings. Adolescence is traditionally that time of life that both sexes try to make sense out of conflicting social and physical demands. I can certainly agree that the need for the drawing on page 26 of a couple engaged in heavy petting may be lacking, but to ignore the existence of such activity in a high-school RPG would be neglectful. I only wish that the authors had expanded their rules on sexual activity a little more to reflect the psychological complications that occur.

Yet, for all its uncertain hovering between too much and too little reality, *AM* is worth looking into carefully. The rules writing is clear, logical in its precision, probably as well-organized as any rulesbook I've seen. The game mechanics are easy to pick up and simple, yet cover a lot of subjects. The preparation for play is not overwhelming, especially if the gamemaster downplays academics. A conscientious gamemaster will keep the violence in line and keep the game from being too much of a "power trip" for the players.

Alma Mater does not deserve to be banned nor dismissed as a "joke" item. There is too much intelligent work put into the rulesbook to have copies collecting dust in the stores. *AM* could be adapted to other games, though the authors admit that they would only recommend this as a "one-shot" scenario. Other phases of real life could be adapted to *AM,* such as college, or working, or even such adventures as those of the Hardy Boys. If you are a serious collector of role-playing games, or someone who buys games in order to put together the perfect system, look at *AM.* The game ventures hesitantly into the hardest "world" to simulate, the real one. Don't judge *Alma Mater* by its cover. □

SPELL LAW

by S. Coleman Charleton, Peter Fenlon Jr., and Steven E. Moffatt
Iron Crown Enterprises
$17.50
Reviewed by Arlen P. Walker

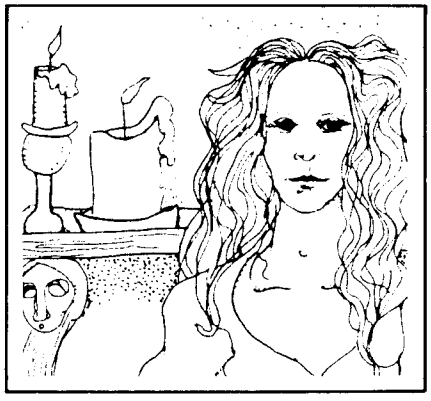
Spell Law is the magic system from the makers of *Arm's Law,* so it may come as a surprise that there are only eight pages of charts in it. There are, however, three twenty-four page 8½"x11" booklets filled with spells. Their cover blurb claims "over 2000 spells," and I'll take their word for it. I haven't counted them but a rough guess would be that there are probably closer to 2400 than 2000, all neatly organized into 162 different lists, and three realms of power with 54 lists each. There is also a twenty-four page rulesbook.

With such a variety of spells in so many categories, mages can easily acquire individually specific spell books even at the early stages in their careers.

Spell Law first breaks magic down into three categories or realms: Essence, Channeling, and Mentalism. Each of these realms is then divided into 54 lists of spells, distributed across eight subcategories. Those who use magic are broken down into two major groups: Pure Spell users, who remain in one realm, and Hybrid Spell users who combine two realms. While hybrid spell users have a wider spectrum of spells to select from, they cannot command as many high-powered spells as those who stick to one theory of magic.

With so many spell choices it's inevitable that there are some very good ones. A personal favorite of mine is a relatively low-level one called Guilt, which causes the target to become so guilty over a past act that he will never even attempt it again.

As a player progresses up the level ladder the spells get gradually more powerful. It is



rather a smooth progression instead of a one-more-jump-to-instant-death as can be found in some other systems. Also, each spell up the ladder is related to the general topic of the list, which makes the learning of the new spell more logical than if a totally different spell had come out of the blue.

In their definitions of realms the authors explain that inert material makes the casting of spells more difficult. It is gratifying to note that the armor of the target can affect the chances for spell failure. Wearing metal will increase the chance that a spell cast at you will fail, and increase it significantly. If the spell succeeds, metal armor can raise your resistance roll. However, the converse of this is not true. Inert material on the caster does not make successful spellcasting more difficult, it makes it impossible. Instead of adding a negative modifier based upon the amount of inert material carried or worn by the caster, they simply forbid it, for no other apparent reason than rule-writer fiat. In a system as dedicated to consistency as *Arm's Law,* this was quite disturbing.

This inflexible attitude is out of place in a work which presents as much variety as this does, but if it were restricted to this one occurence it would not be nearly as disheartening. But this attitude is displayed again and again.

Â spellcaster is not given a penalty on his success roll when casting a spell of a higher level than his own, such a cast is simply forbidden. Likewise, a spellcaster picks his base lists, or areas of specialization, at the time the character is created, and may on no account change them. The character cannot grow and acquire new interests, merely sidelines. And when a mage gains a new level, his knowledge and capability in all areas is increased whether or not he has used or even studied these areas.

The box cover claims "detailed alchemy and spell research rules." Well, they're half right. The alchemical rules are fairly detailed and good. But there is less than a page of spell research rules, and almost everything given on that page will be obvious to any referee.

The rules explanations given are not always clear or useful. In explaining the realms of power they list the realm of Arms. The first line of this entry then calmly informs us "Arms is not a realm of power and is only mentioned for completeness." If it is not a realm, how are the interests of completeness served by mentioning it in a discussion of them?

Spell Law is a dual-natured product. It provides many different spells, a logical method of learning them, and enough flexibility and variety to spice up any campaign. These reasons make it worth the purchase price, if they are what your campaign requires. But, for some reason the designers failed to remain true to this flexibility. The rigidity left in the game gets in the way of its enjoyment. With a few minor modifications it could have been so much better.

Using *Spell Law* with *WOW/RQ*

Converting *Spell Law* for use with any system using experience levels is fairly sraightforward, however level advancement for mages will have to be adjusted for the energy level of any campaign.

Level-less systems such as *RuneQuest* or *WOW* are another matter. With these systems the interface is not so obvious. Here are some suggestions for converting *Spell Law* to these systems.

Treat each spell list as a skill. Assign a base chance of 5% for each list the player picks. After a number of uses of the spells on any list equal to the current rank of the character in that list, let the character have a skill roll — a normal one, not a skill improvement roll. This roll can be modified for high characteristics by adding 5% for each three points the relevant characteristic is above 12 (INT for Essence, POW for Channeling, and CHA for Mentalism).

If the character makes this roll then he gains one level of skill in that list. He also now gets a skill improvement roll.

The character's base chance for the successful casting of the spell is rolled as the rules indicate, except use the character's level of skill in that list as the level modifier. For all other modifiers, and the table itself, use the *Spell Law* rules. The resistance roll can either be made using the relevant characteristics of both players on a standard *RQ/WOW* resistance roll, or use the resistance table in *Spell Law* substituting characteristics for levels. The one in *Spell Law* is easier on the underdog. □

RECON

Joe F. Martin
Role Playing Games, Inc.
$10.00
Reviewed by Anders Swenson

Recon is the first adventure game oriented towards the world of modern small-unit infantry actions, typified by the reconnaissance patrols of the recent Vietnam war and by small mercenary-guerrilla operations of the current, post-Vietnam war period. The book itself is composed of 42 magazine-styled 8½"x11" center-stapled pages and a slick cover. It looks like any mercenary soldiering magazine that can sometimes be found in hobby shops.

The *Recon* game system consists almost entirely of the combat system and associated information. The rules begin with general notes on play mechanics. Characteristics and skills form the basis for the individual player-character capabilities. The individual characters, or recons are next formed into teams to accomplish missions. The rest of the rules consist mainly of short articles about individual aspects of small unit procedures and weapons use.

The *Recon* game system is based on the roll of a percentile die, somewhat confusingly called 2D100 in the text. There are three major characteristics: Strength, which governs both hit points and carrying capacity, as well as movement speed; Alertness, the capacity to observe small details; and Agility, a measure of quickness and precision of action. All three are rolled using a D100 with the provision that a character whose three characteristics add up to 100 or less is 4F and may be discarded.

The skills list covers most topics taught by army instructors around the world. Each character may learn a number of skills determined by the roll of a die cross-indexed on a chart. There are four categories of skills, Small Arms, Heavy Weapons, Hand-to-Hand combat and Non-Weapon skills. The initial ability in a given skill for a character is determined by a flat percentile roll — taking a given skill more than once increases the ability by ten percent for each additional multiple of the skill. In addition, each character is assigned to one of the typical jobs in a fully mounted recon team: Point, Pigman (machine gunner), RTO, Intelligence Specialist, Grenadier, Medic, Sniper, Heavy Weapons and Demolitions. A character will operate at a bonus skill level if functioning in his job class in a team.

Character improvement is based on experience points. Various factors, including the successful use of skills, the successful practice of their craft, and the level of the opposing forces in the scenario, as well as the ability of the team to avoid casualties, and contribute to the team score for a particular mission. The total score is then divided among the number in the team at the start of the scenario. The points available to each individual recon may be used to buy new skills or skill levels, or to increase primary characteristics.

An important aspect of the book is the atmosphere that it imparts to the potential Mission Director (*Recon's* term for the inevitable GM). The book reads like a lecture to a military class given by an army vet with much use of military and Vietnam war era slang. In fact, it is the purpose of the author that this game help legitimize the Vietnam war as a valid portion of the recent American heritage. By playing *Recon* scenarios and winning, players may gain both a better sense of the kinds of things which

confronted combat units in Southeast Asia and a more positive view of the soldiers who lived through them in real life.

As a set of rules this book is very loosely organized. Hard rules are interspersed with background and scenario ideas, the table of contents only gives a vague notion of what is in the book, and the constant use of jargon must be hard on those gamers who haven't served in the armed forces. I found the text written well enough to give me the patience needed to find the key rules. This is the saving grace of the text which would otherwise have been impossible to use based on organization alone. I think that the skills usage system is best discarded. The skills themselves are well selected, but they should be grafted onto a different basic system. *RuneQuest* or *Traveller* based games of *Recon* would be satisfying, possibly more so than the original rules. The point is that the important part of *Recon* isn't the system, but the atmosphere and the setting. The rules envision that role-playing will be mainly within the recon unit as the player-characters perform their missions, but that is no different from typical play within most adventure gaming rules.

I liked *Recon* and GMs who use the rules straight or as a hybrid system should have no difficulty in constructing a rough, tough campaign where Sergeant Rock and company knock the commies for a loss and score points for Our Side. The text is unabashedly chauvinist — some readers will inevitably find this irritating or unacceptable, but that, too, was part of the Vietnam era. □

WIZARD'S REALM

By Cheryl W. Duval, Niels Erickson, William G. Murphy, and Clifford Polite

Mystic Swamp

$ Not available at press time

Reviewed by C. D. Martin

Wizard's Realm is a sixty-four page role-playing game. It is of about the same difficulty as *Tunnels & Trolls, The Fantasy Trip,* and *High Fantasy*. It aims at a playable balance of detail and simplicity.

Players may be humans, elves, hobbits, dwarfs, or orcs. They may also be goblins, trolls, or the vaguely canine Bogies. The character attributes are Strength, Agility, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Appearance, Luck, and Charisma. They are rolled up with two ten-sided dice. They may be raised to a max of 25 through experience.

The sum of a character's strength, agility, and dexterity is his attack number (AN). His defense number (DN) is the sum of his strength, constitution, and intelligence. Add strength and constitution to get his survival points (SP). A character receives 1D6 more SPs from levels two through twenty. Mages also have Power Points (PP). PPs are equal to intelligence times a multiple plus constitution and dexterity. The multiple is ten for Spellcasters and twenty for Wizards.

There are many character classes, but there are only three experience tables. The most difficult is for Wizards, who must all be half-elves. Spellcasters, Knights-Trenfher (paladins), and Anti-Paladins have less difficulty in going up levels. Adventurers and Warriors have the easiest table.

A Knight-Trenfher automatically raises the luck of his party by one. When he reaches fifth level, a Knight-Trenfher seeks out a special steed. Anti-Paladins are meant to be non-player-characters. Their special powers are left up to the gamemaster. Alignment is on a simple good-evil axis.

The differences between characters come from the players' choic of skills. There is an extensive list of skills. Each character starts with three Skill Credits. You get more Skill Credits as your character goes up in levels: 4 for 2-6, 6 for 7-12 and 8 for 13-20. You can't go above twentieth level, but each thousand points of experience gained after that gives you another Skill Credit.

A Skill Credit will raise an attribute by one point. No character attribute may be raised by more than one point per level. One Skill Credit will buy a spell, a skill, or a weapon skill at fifty per cent effectiveness. These may be raised further in varying amounts by spending more Skill Credits.

Characters begin with too few skills. At the other end, twentieth level characters have much too easy a time. A twentieth level Wizard increases his skills almost twice as fast as a thirteenth level Wizard. If you choose to play *Wizard's Realm*, you may wish to change the way Skill Credits are given out. Also it costs exactly the same to raise an attribute from 24 to 25 as it does to from 2 to 3. This seems absurd to me.

The combat system is simple. Too simple. Shields and armor add to DN. Weapons add to AN and to DN if no shield is used. The attacker rolls D20 plus his AN. The defender rolls 1D20 plus his DN. If the attacker's total minus the defender's total is a positive number, the defender loses that many SPs. If a defender loses over half his SPs to one attack, he loses his next attack and must save against falling down. All saving rolls are done by rolling D20 against an attribute.

I decided to test the combat system by using twins. All their attributes were 11. Both knew medium sword at 50% and very large sword at 100%. Each had a large helmet, chainmail, kite shield, and a medium sword. Combat was even, with a small advantage going to the first blow.

I then raised one twin to second level. He now gained four more Skill Credits. One raised his strength. One gave him full use of the very large sword. The last two gave him +2 with the weapon on attack and defense. I gave him 3 more SPs for going up the level.

I then ran the combat off on my Apple II computer. The man with the smaller weapon always swung first. Neither fighter was required to save against falling. The pair fought ten thousand combats to the death. The second-level character died thirteen times and always took less than half damage from any single blow.

The *Wizard's Realm* combat system is unbalanced. Marginally weaker characters are doomed in single combat. I'm surprised this wasn't noticed in playtesting. The *Tunnels & Trolls* combat system has the same problem. But, *T&T* makes up for it with an excellent mass combat system that averages everything out. *Wizard's Realm* has no such saving grace.

Magic is quite powerful. Magic is treated as a skill rather than as a certainty. The average spell uses 100 PPs. Since a mage can regain his PPs only once a day, he must be careful with his spells. PPs may be stored in magical devices. A Spellcaster's ring may hold up to 500 PPs. A Wizard's ring can hold 10,000 PPs. Spell names suffer from the same cuteness disease that afflicts *T&T*. Do we really need names such as Kiss Me, You Fool, and Rolling Bones?

The gamemaster's section is clear and simple. The discussion of non-player-characters is good but is partly spoiled by including a large NPC loyalty table. In an ideal campaign, NPCs should be played as characters — the GM should make them comply with whatever has happened in the game.

The game includes several player aids. There is a detailed map of the town of Mousehole with 70 listed locations. There is a campaign map on the back of the Mousehole map. It is hard to read some of the hand-lettered names on the campaign map.

The rules include a beginner's adventure, "The Astrologer's Tower." It consists of a trek across a swamp filled with random monsters and a linear dungeon (the tower). Both forms are rather rigid for truly good role-playing.

The game is semi-professionally produced with ragged-right margins. Pages 15 and 50 were transposed in my copy. *Wizard's Realm* is printed like a calendar, at right angles to normal. This can be rather disconcerting.

Wizard's Realm suffers from a lack of development. The designers knew how they wanted the game to play, so it always worked for them. They didn't consider the problems outsiders would have with this game. ■

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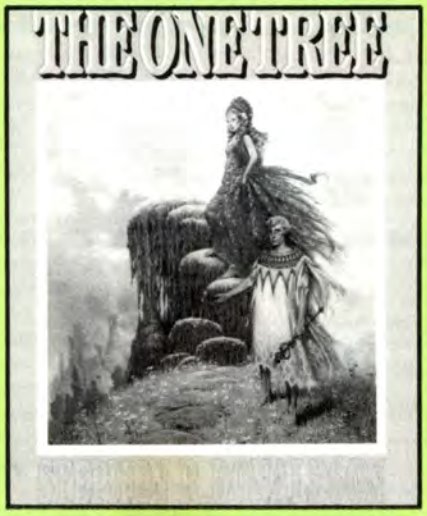

The One Tree **by Stephen Donaldson. Published by Del Rey Books (Ballantine Books), 475 pp., $14.50.**

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

This is the second volume of a fantasy trilogy that began with *The Wounded Land,* currently the 4th best-selling SF or fantasy paperback. I expect that *The One Tree* will be just as popular when it comes out in paperback in 1983. This is the fifth novel in Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, and presents a deepening of the mythos in new and unexpected directions, making *The One Tree* particularly useful as source material for fantasy role-playing game campaigns.

Covenant is an unlikely hero for the series. A leper made bitter by rejection from his wife and town, Covenant is drawn into an alternate world. He is pushed into a Miltonic struggle between God and the Devil, where, instead of being banished to Hell, the Lord of Despite is trapped within the created world and the Arch of Time. To escape, this being (called Lord Foul) must either goad the creator into destroying the Land, or destroy it himself. Covenant is a key figure in this struggle, because he wears a ring of a metal not found in the Land, which allows him to wield Wild Magic – but not necessarily to master it. In the first trilogy, in three trips between our world and the Land, Covenant aids a Council and their allies to rebuff Despite's latest campaign of conquest.

In the second trilogy, ten years have passed in our world, but centuries have passed in the Land. Covenant and a new major character, Dr. Linden Avery, are drawn back into the Land through the machinations of the evil one and his followers in our world. In the first trilogy, the Land is almost alive, and can be drawn upon for magical energy. In the second trilogy, the Land has almost been killed, and in places is now desert, where the inhabitants perform human sacrifice to appease Lord Foul the Despiser, without realizing that they merely increase his ability to destroy them. Covenant finds that he no longer has his former abilities drawn from the Land, although the Wild Magic is now stronger than ever, and threatens to possess him to the destruction of his friends. He vows to seek out the One Tree and from a branch remake the Staff of Law that he hopes will allow him to restore peace and life to the Land. There is much interesting mythmaking in both trilogies, which, while often drawn from recognizable sources, is molded by Donaldson into unusual new forms.

The One Tree is the quest for the material for the staff, but it is also a quest for self-control and self-realization, in both Covenant and Avery. Their depth of characterization and development distinguishes Donaldson's writing from fantasy writers of lesser skill as much as his mythmaking. But, for our purposes as gamers, the features of greater interest are the Land and other territories, and their races and cultures, and *The One Tree* shows us new elements of each. One of the most mind-boggling discoveries is that the world is believed by more than one culture to be the crust on the back of a serpent whose awakening will be the end of the world, a new version of the Ourobouros legend, and a good one. There are some interesting sea sirens, whose effect on the Haruchai (the parent race of the Bloodguard) is startling to those of us who thought we understood their character from the first trilogy. The unexpected revelation that the Earthpower which the Staff of Law drew upon has a real existence in a fairy-like race of elementals is an exciting creation, and one that could be put to good use in gaming. Their inability or unwillingness to interfere in the struggle to restore health to the Land will presumably be an important plot element in the third volume of the trilogy. □

The Devil in a Forest, **by Gene Wolfe; Ace 1976; 222 pp.; $2.25**

Reviewed by David R. Dunham

Many fantay role-playing campaigns are placed in a quasi-medieval setting. So are a lot of the stories I've read, but only Gene Wolfe's *The Devil in a Forest* really evoked in me the feel for life in the middle ages. The difference lies in the aspects of medieval life portrayed. The other stories usually dealt with the nobility, the clergy, or their associates, while *Devil* is the story of the common folk. Anyone who is involved in a medieval campaign would be interested in seeing the underside of medieval life.

The story takes place in and around a small, nameless village. Its only claim to fame is its proximity to St. Agnes' Well, occasionally visited by pilgrims. The central character is Mark, a fourteen year old boy who keeps getting swept up by different sides in the conflicts the village is the scene of. Life seems an endless struggle: villagers against local witch, villagers against local outlaw, villagers against villagers, villagers against soldiers. Indeed, if life in the village were always this bad, nobody would have survived, but the book apparently takes place in a break from the normal placidity.

The characters are real people living in a real world. Wat the Wayfarer is a great model for role-players who enjoy rogues, while those who play clerics could get something out of the Abbe. The characters matter, even if they are pawns: Mark gets tossed from group to opposing group like a piece of driftwood, yet his actions make a difference in how things turn out.

Another attraction of the book are the mysteries. There are several instances where someone deduces who did what, but they fit smoothly into the plot rather than being the plot, as in many mystery stories.

Not only is *Devil* a good book to read, but it's a fascinating glimpse at the lifestyle of a peasant. Lots of small details show how their standard of living is much lower than what we're used to. Mark doesn't have a real bed, for example, and though he won't starve he may go hungry at times. Illiteracy is rampant – Mark can barely remember what the first letter of his name looks like. Everyone has their place in society, and peasants certainly aren't at the top, as is shown in their dealings with nobility and soldiers (or 'hardbacks,' as they are called). Despite all this, or perhaps because they're used to it, the peasants do seem able to enjoy life.

Read *The Devil in a Forest* for its own sake, then use it to breathe some depth into your medieval campaign. ■

QUICK PLUGS

Every issue of **Different Worlds** *presents capsule descriptions of new products. Publishers are encouraged to send samples of their products for announcement in this column.*

This issue we present the last of the summer releases.

NEW ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DAREDEVILS — Designed by Bob Charrette and Paul Hume, this game comes boxed with a 64-page rulesbook, a 32-page adventure book, and play-aids. This is a game of pulp-style adventures in the 1930s. The rules include cultural skills, careers, motivation, disease, acid, and much more. The adventure book contains four scenarios ranging from a murder mystery to a globe-trotting adventure. Available from Fantasy Games Unlimited, PO Box 182, Roslyn NY 11576. It retails for $15.

STARFLEET VOYAGES — This is a science fiction role-playing game designed by Michael Scott. It comes boxed and includes an 80-page rulesbook, starship record sheets, character record sheets, starship markers, 3D6, 1D4, 1D8, 1D12, and 1D20. The rules cover psionics, the creation of alien creatures, star mapping, scenarios, and so forth. Available from Terra Games, 15300 Anderson Dr. Biloxi MS 39532.

FOR TRAVELLER

PRISON PLANET — This is adventure 8 designed by Erik Wilson and Dave Emigh. The 64-page book describes a prison escape adventure. The adventurers are first taken to the prison for some crime, then must survive events and encounters as they accumulate information necessary for the escape, then breakout, then trek across the outside world to a city for the final escape. Available from GDW, PO Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61701.

DIVINE INTERVENTION/MIGHT OF CONQUEST — This is double adventure 6. "Divine Intervention", designed by Lawrence Schick, covers a mission to alter the policies of a religious dictatorship. "Night of Conquest", designed by William H. Keith Jr. and J. Andrew Keith, deals with the crew of a trading vessel caught up into a conflict on a newly contacted world. Available from GDW.

CARDBOARD HEROES — Newly available are set 2, Imperial Marines, and set 3, Zhodani. They retail for $3.50 each. Set 2 contains three identical sets of 19 officers, sentries, and troops, plus extra weapon and equipment counters. Set 3 contains three identical sets of 19 officers and troops and also includes extra weapon and gear counters. Available postpaid from Steve Jackson Games, PO Box 18957, Austin TX 78760. Texas residents add 5% sales tax.

FOR DRAGONQUEST

HEROES AND VILLIANS [*sic*] — This is a 48-page book of characters and also describes an inn and a hideout. This is designed by Edward R. G. Mortimer. Each character is illustrated and the book is keyed to the *Frontiers of Alusia* map. It retails for $7.00 and is available from Judges Guild, RR8 Box 9, 1221 N Sunnyside Rd, Decatur IL 62522.

STARSILVER TREK — This 48-page book describes a quest for a deposit of magical metal with which magical weapons are made. Designed by Diane Mortimer and Bill Pixley, the adventure includes a sea journey, a trek through a forest, a cave complex, a ridge, a valley, and many new monsters. The price is $7. Available from Judges Guild.

FOR THIEVES' GUILD

THIEVES' GUILD 7 — This installment contains articles on inborn advantages and disadvantages, a lockpicking expansion, and scenarios involving the burglary of a smithy and a raid on a caravan. The 48-page book is available from GameLords, 18616 Grosbeak Ter., Gaithersburg MD 20879.

FOR TOP SECRET

LADY IN DISTRESS — This 32-page book describes a raid on a cruise ship to apprehend a terrorist agent and secure information on terrorist activity. Designed by Mike Carr and Corey Koeburnick, the set includes the ship's five decks with 18 to 66 areas to explore. Published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR AD&D

THE FORGOTTEN TEMPLE OF THARIZDON — This is an adventure set on Greyhawk for character levels 5-10. Designed by E. Gary Gygax, it is designed to interface with *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*. The adventure involves a search for a lost temple with promises of huge fortunes. The quest includes a wilderness trek and the search of the temple interior. The 32-page book is published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR GANGBUSTERS

MURDER IN HARMONY — This is a murder mystery for three to six characters of first to third level. Designed by Marc Acres, the mystery has the player-characters first search Harmony Manor, the scene of the crime. The clues lead the investigators to various parts of the town, including the train station. This 32-page book is published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR YSGARTH

THE FAIR AT TEZKOREL — This is Uttgart scenario 3. Designed by David F. Nalle, the 12-page booklet describes a country fair with 26 places to visit. It comes with variable encounters, major character stats, creatures, and magic items. Available for $1.50 plus 25 cents for postage from Ragnarok Enterprises, 1402 21st St NW, Washington DC 20036.

FOR TFT

TFT CHARACTER RECORD SHEETS — These sheets are back-printed with room for stats, weapons, and talents on one side and equipment outlines to show what and where equipment is carried. Approved for use with TFT. Thirty sheets are available for $3.95 from Fantasimulations Associates, PO Box 5541, Evansville IN 47715.

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

SHADOWS OF YOG-SOTHOTH — This 80-page book contains seven interconnecting scenarios that lead the investigators on globe trotting adventures. Edited by Sandy Petersen, the adventures involve a manic quest to save the world from Cthulhu himself and the rise of R'lyeh. Also included are two addition bonus adventures and player handouts. Price is $10, available from Chaosium Inc., PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706. Add $2 for postage and handling. California residents add appropriate sales tax.

FOR RUNEQUEST

QUESTWORLD — This comes boxed and includes an eight-page introduction to this new campaign world, a 40-page book of four scenarios, a 48-page book containing a single large scenario, a 32-page book with three short scenarios and a solo scenario, and a 17" by 22" map. The package des-

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cribes a new campaign world for *RuneQuest*. The introduction includes maps and guidelines for contributing personally to the project. The price is $15. Available from Chaosium Inc.

FOR ANY SYSTEM

CORSAIRS OF TALLIBAR — This is a 48-page adventure designed by Mike Wilson. The adventure covers a raid into a pirate stronghold. The pirate's island holds many wandering monsters in its rocky terrain, forests, hills, mountains, and marshes. The pirate fortress itself has 71 spots to explore. This sells for $4.98 and is published by Judges Guild.

BOOK OF TREASURE MAPS III — This is an 80-page book designed by Rudy Kraft and Edward R. G. Mortimer. It contains ten adventure, each with maps, background information, and accompanying rumors. The longest adventure is 31 pages with numerous encounters. The price is $6.98, and it is published by Judges Guild.

SHIELD MAIDENS OF SEA RUNE — This is designed by Bryan Hinnen and Dan Hauffe, and describes an area controlled by sea raiders. There are many maps depicting wilderness areas, a village, inns, temples, shipyards, keeps, hamlets, as well as ship drawings, a castle, and new monsters. The 80-page book sells for $6.98 and is published by Judges Guild.

PIRATES OF HAGROST — This 48-page book contains descriptions of a village with encounters, ruins below the village, and another village. Many maps accompany the text. Designed by Bryan Hinnen and Dan Hauffe, the price is $4.98 and it is available from Judges Guild.

WONDROUS WEAPONS — This has 120 enchanted weapon descriptions, prefaced with a description of the weapon shop that sells them. There is also an enchanted weapon creation table. It is 64-pages long and is designed by Joseph Weingand. The price is $5.98 and this is available from Judges Guild.

WITCHES' COURT MARSHES — This 80-page book by Bryan Hinnen contains 26 pages of maps detailing the area. It also details a village, the witch character class, and a dungeon adventure with 30 places to explore. Published by Judges Guild.

CAVES AND CAVERNS — This 64-page book contains 48 caves and caverns along with a terrain effects chart, a random cave generator, and random encounter tables. Designed by John Mortimer and available for $3.98 from Judges Guild.

DRUIDS OF DOOM — Designed by Bill Pixley and Diane Mortimer, this 38-page book describes several towers and a keep with a necropolis, sanctuary, and grotto. There are also new magic weapon and monster descriptions. This sells for $4.98 and is available from Judges Guild.

DEMONS OF DUNDURN — A 48-page book coming with a 34" by 22" double sided map. Designed by Derek Watson, the adventure includes a visit to a village and involvement with the activities there. There are descriptions of the docks, an inn, and a castle. It comes with new monster descriptions and plenty of background material. The price is $5.98 from Judges Guild.

NANORIEN STONES — This is a 32-page book that comes in its own folder. The adventure involves a journey into the elemental planes. Designed by Jim Gallagher and Steve Morrison, there are 20 new monster descriptions. It sells for $7 and is available from Mayfair Games, PO Box 5987, Chicago IL 60680. Add $1 for postage, Illinois residents add 6% sales tax.

FEZ I — This 48-page book comes in a folder. Designed by Len Bland and James Robert, it contains a long scenario with three rounds of play. The characters explore a village, several keeps, castles, and caves. It is priced at $7. Available from Mayfair Games.

DWARVES — This is a 96-page sourcebook on dwarfs. Designed by Paul Karczag, it has a chronology of dwarven history, dwarf life, magic, artifacts, religion, city description and adventures, and more. It is available from Mayfair Games for $10.

CHARACTER LAW — This is a set of guidelines for fantasy role-playing character development. Designed by S. Coleman Charlton and Peter C. Fenlon, it has 19 character classes, individualization of characters, experience guidelines, and numerous charts and tables. Available from Iron Crown Enterprises, PO Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902.

MAGAZINES

AMAZING — This F&SF magazine was originally founded in 1926 by Hugo Gernsback. It is now owned by TSR Hobbies and edited by George Scithers. TSR's first issue, Nov. '82, has a Michael Whelan cover and stories by Jack Williamson, Gene Wolfe, Robert Silverberg, and Larry Niven, among others. Copy price is $1.50, published bimonthly. A six-issue sub is $9. Write to Dragon Publishing, PO Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

NECRONOMICON — Edited by Anthony Kapolka, it is published irregularly. Issue 3, August '82, contains articles on *RuneQuest, Top Secret,* monsters and magic items, a *Traveller* scenario, and fiction. The 20-page booklet can be obtained for $1 plus 25 cents postage from the publisher. Subscriptions are $5 for five issues. Write to Necronomicon, 1902 Greenhill Road, Lansdowne PA 19050.

OLYMPUS — Issue 2 contains new spells, magic items, and monsters, a scenario, an article on familiars, fiction, and a comic strip. The 28-page booklet is edited by Stephen Breeser and sells for $1.50. Subs are $8.50 for six issues. The bimonthly magazine is available from Olympus Publishing, 3114 Riverfalls Dr., Northbrook IL 60062.

VARIANT — This is an 8-page magazine edited by Gary E. Reilly. The first issue contains, among other things, a new spell, an article on drugs, a starship, guidelines on a cattle drive, and a treasure. The second issue has new character classes, a starship, spells, plantlore, and new equipment. The cover price is $1.50, quarterly; $4 for a four-issue sub. Available from Reilly Associates, PO Box 17144, Rochester NY 14617.

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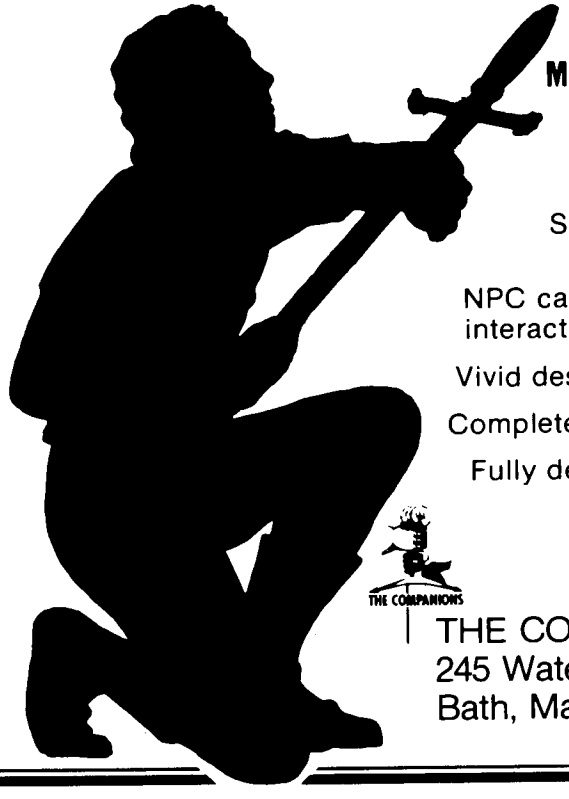

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Cinema News & Reviews

The Sword of Hollywood

By Larry DiTillio

Greetings Cinemaphiles! 1983 stretches before us as of this writing, promising more of the fantastic-adventure-type action we all adore. In a brief moment or two, I'll be reporting on a few upcoming releases for '83, but first I have the dubious honor of giving out the **First Annual Sword of Hollywood Award** *for the best of 1982. As you are all aware, there's plenty to choose from.*

1982 was the year of *E.T., Conan, The Beastmaster, Blade-Runner,* and more. However, after careful consideration, my choice has to be *Road Warrior*. This modestly-budgeted, post-holocaust, action-adventure flick maintained a pace that was nothng short of phenomenal; while at the same time avoiding the sappy sentimentality viewers might expect from the story.

Road Warrior was produced and directed by Australian film-maker George Miller, a man to watch in the upcoming year. Artistically, *Road Warrior* is well-directed despite the fact that it is nowhere near being "significant drama." What *Road Warrior* is, is the penultimate "gut movie." It sets out to give you a primitive shot in the emotions and succeeds totally. It out-barbarianed *Conan* by about 1000 percent; gave viewers more action in a single scene than in all of *Raiders* and remained true-to-itself throughout. If you didn't see it, head for your local bijou the moment there's a revival.

Since I've cited the best on 1982, it's only fair that I also make mention of last year's prime gobbler; namely *TRON*. This Disney production, loaded with spiffy special effects, was sunk by a totally unbelievable story. Had it been produced in the late '60's, its flaws might have been overlooked by an audience accustomed to seeing everything stoned. However, it's now the '80's, and even die-hard altered-substance fans have trouble with the incredible illogic of *TRON*. It's a shame, because at heart *TRON* had an interesting concept. It's sole problem was the inept execution of that concept, particularly the mickey-mouse dialogue that seems to plague all Disney films. Oh well, someone's got to lose, and in the case of *TRON*, it was definitely the fans.

So much for the annual awards ceremony. Now it's time for a quick message to one of my fans and then onto news. I received a note from a fan, Mr. Anthony Gresham, asking me to take the film *The Beastmaster* and adapt it for role-playing games as I did with *Clash of the Titans* in issue 14 of *DW*. Well, Tony, I'd be glad to, except for one problem – I didn't see it. *The Beastmaster* opened in Lost Angels the day I was off to Alaska for a much-needed vacation and by the time I returned, it had disappeared totally. This very quick run puzzled me, since I had heard very good things about the film, but I hope it will return in the near future at which time I will try to fulfill your request. Meanwhile if there are any other films you or other "Sword of Hollywood" fans would like to see adapted to gaming, please write and let me know. Address letters in care of *Different Worlds* and they will pass them on. The same goes for any other feedback you the readers might have. I'll even try to respond personally to really interesting queries, so don't delay, write to Ye Ol' Sword today.

The Barbarians are coming!!! – Strap on your heavy leather, grab your broadsword, and don't get any blood on your popcorn. The barbarians are arriving in force, their steel thirsty. Check out these announced titles for the new year – *Gunan, King of the Barbarians; Ator, the Fighting Eagle* and *Ator the Invincible* (a series, starring Miles O'Keefe as Ator); *Hundra* (a "Red Sonja" type played by Laurene Landon); *The Lost City;* and last but not least, a new version of the H. Rider Haggard classic *She*, starring the beauteous Sandhal Berghman (who played Valeria in *Conan*. Yum, yum.) Most of these films fall solidly in the "B" category, so don't look for too much, but see them nonetheless. Even the worst adventure film can provoke stimulating ideas for gaming.

Mazes and Monsters! Rona Jafee's addlepated assassination of role-playing is now underway as a CBS TV movie. For those of you not familiar with this book, it concerns a group of college students whose role-playing activity causes one of the group to become totally psychotic, believing himself to be a real-life cleric. This madness (which is all too close to the James Egbert incident) leads him to nearly kill a man whom he perceives as an enemy and ultimately leaves him a burnt-out shell. The only thing *Mazes and Monsters* can do for role-playing is provide more ammunition for misguided moralists who claim that role-play is dangerous to mental and emotional health. See it, if you absolutely have to, but be prepared to hate it.

Yet more TV sorcery – slated for production by Warner Brothers for TV are no less than two sorcery titles, *Wizards and Warriors* and *The Mystic Warrior*. The first is for CBS, the second for ABC, and both would seem to be potential pilots for series. Neither has been cast as yet, but you can bet Ye Ol' Sword will stay on the lookout for further word.

Superman flies again! – On June 2nd, production of *Superman III* began. Locations for the third in the Superman series will be England, Italy, Canada, and the United States. Chris Reeve and Margot Kidder will be back as Clark Kent and Lois Lane, but a new villain will make his appearance. Who this villain will be is a secret but he will be played by none other than Richard Pryor!

Jaws takes another bite! – The third *Jaws* picture is now shooting in Orlando, Florida. It will be called *Jaws 3-D* and yes fans, that means what it says. What an idea!

A *DW* exclusive. – Ye Ol' Sword was chatting with a writer friend the other day and learned some astonishing news. Currently in development is a television series called *OtherWorld*, which is based on (are you ready?) *video games*. Yes, I know that sounds like *TRON*, but no one ever said that television was a medium noted for originality. *OtherWorld* will use various video games as a format for a different adventure story each week. The show is being produced by Tomorrow Productions and the Atari Corporation is heavily involved with it. The show should hit the airwaves next September and I'm proud to say that this is the first announcement of its existence to reach print. So who said Ye Ol' Sword doesn't print hot items?

From the past – Out of the not-too-distant past comes a skin-crawler called *Galaxy of Terror* which enjoyed a short run back in 1981. This monster-filled space opera makes a perfect scenario for a fantasy or science fiction campaign and boasts some truly horrifying special effects. *Galaxy of Terror* concerns the adventures of a hand-picked crew who must travel to a remote planet and determine what happened to a previous expedition, now lost. The crew must breach an ancient pyramid on the planet, a pyramid whose winding tunnels hold all manner of slimy horror. The film may be a little bit too strong for younger viewers or for the squeamish, but if you relish a good scare and don't mind some exceedingly graphic gore, *Galaxy of Terror* is for you. I saw it on cable TV and was so wog-boggled I had to catch it a few times. The pace of the movie is relentless, there is no time to catch your breath before the next delicious terror arrives and wonder-of-wonders, there's even a coherent plot amidst all the action. The title is about the only weak point in the film, so don't write it off because of that.

Before I leave you for another month, I'm compelled to lay in a hesitant but enthusiastic plug for the new *AD&D* video cartridge produced by Mattel for their Intellivision system. The plug is hesitant because I've had it up to the eyeballs with TSR's way of doing business, but enthusiastic because the game is great. If you've got an Intellivision system buy this cartridge, I guarantee you'll love it.

That's all the scoop from Lost Angels. Be back next month with more. Adios! □

THE DARK CRYSTAL

Producers . . . . . Jim Henson
Gary Kurtz
Directors . . . . . Jim Henson
Frank Oz
Screenplay . . . . David Odell
Music . . . . . Trevor Jones

CAST

Jim Henson . . . . Jen, a Gelfling
The Ritual Master
Frank Oz . . . . . Aughra, Keeper of Secrets
The Chamberlain
Dave Goelz . . . . Fizzgig
The Garthim-Master
Brian Muehl . . . . The Ornamentalist
UrZah
The Dying Master
Kathryn Mullen . . Kira, a Gelfling

Previewed by John Nubbin

All in all, it was a bad year for fantasy filmdom. Sword and sorcery was given ill treatment on the screen and at home. *Conan the Barbarian* led off the summer, followed by *The Sword and the Sorcerer*, and finally *The Beastmaster. The Archer* was re-run on television and fantasy book sales went up month after month.

The reasons for the artistic failure of Conan and his friends are many and similar, but not worth debating. They may soon be forgotten, thanks to the talents of Jim Henson, Frank Oz, and the rest of the crew that has spent the last five years (off and on) putting together *The Dark Crystal*.

This newest film from the creator of the Muppets (still unreleased at this time) promises to be an extraordinary treat. Henson has shown as much as he can; film clips, stills by the dozen, looks at the props, costumes, puppets and sets, everything but the picture itself. So far, it all promises to blend together quite nicely. The story is simple.

Jen, a Gelfling, believing himself to be the last of his kind, is set on a quest by the UrRu, a clan of mystics who raised him from childhood. His task is to return a small shard of crystal to its proper place before the Great Conjunction, a time when the the world's three suns will come together as one. If Jen fails to do this, all things whole and good will be destroyed as the Conjunction will increase the power of the SkekSis (the bad guys) beyond measure. Things are, as is natural in any fantasy adventure, more complicated than that, but it gives the proper idea.

Along the way to the crystal's proper resting place, Jen encounters monsters, true love, natural dangers, and, evidently, more than a little comedy. How all this will work out, only a viewing of the finished film will tell us. The signs are good, though. Audiences should be able to expect the realism in all of Henson's new creatures that they have received in the past. Some of the startlingly real animals his crews have created in the past (not to mention Frank Oz's masterful Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*) are strong indicators that what we shall see in *The Dark Crystal* may be Henson's best yet.

As always, many things could go wrong. The script *might* not be up to par. The voices *may* not match up to our expectations; the scenes *could* look fake — the entire thing might look like a set full of puppets, rather than the totally alien world the producers are promising. Such fears seem groundless, though. Unlike so many other recent productions, this one hides nothing. The press has not been denied access and so far, everything they have seen has had the usual Henson stamp of excellence.

This is not a hard sell so much as it is a hopeful crossing of fingers. It is true that *The Dark Crystal* might be no better than the rest of 1982's films. It is also true that if a year previously, someone had told me I'd be waiting with high hopes to see a fantasy film filled with puppets, after having condemned Robert E. Howard's *Conan*, that I would have laughed in their faces.

But it very well may be that he who laughs last actually does laugh best. *The Dark Crystal* has all the earmarks of a winner, at exactly the time when we need one. □

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by GIGI D'ARN

Dear Tadashi,

The Big E.G.G. blows his stack! In the September and October issues of the *Dragon* he attacks ORIGINS, the Game Manufacturers Association (GAMA), and RICK LOOMIS for conspiring to ruin the prestige of TSR's GENCON game convention. Ridiculous! All my sources confirm that nothing is further from the truth. GAMA makes decisions without any thought for GENCON or TSR. I would bet that Gary was upset at GAMA for their inconsiderate choice of holding ORIGINS '78 in Detroit so close to the GENCON site. Scheduling ORIGINS '83 back in Detroit plus Rick's comments in the May issue of *Wargamer's Information* criticizing TSR's attitude toward the rest of the industry must have been the last straw. The exchange of fire continues with the October issue of *WI* where Rick pointedly condemns Gary for his insulting editorials. I have no idea when this skirmishing will end, but I do feel it is time to cool it for a while.

Did you take a gander at the November issue of *Games*? In the annual list of their 100 favorite games, Chaosium was again totally ignored while just about all of Eon's titles made it. Do I smell a rat? Among others selected were *Traveller, D&D, Star Web,* and *Oregon Trail.*

On the miniatures front, Grenadier Models announced an unsuccesful takeover bid by TSR. A source informs me that TSR's bid involved no cash and only offered continued employment to those presently with the company. This has severed relations between Grenadier and TSR. Grenadier will lose their *AD&D* license and will start the new Fantasy Lords line. That is a good idea, the *AD&D* figures are out of date anyway.

This means TSR is still in the market for a miniatures company. They will either start up their very own headed by DUKE SEIFRIED or buy another. A prime candidate is Heritage Models, as Duke apparently still owns some stock in his old company. If TSR gets Heritage, I wonder what will become of the *Champions* figure license they would own, and what of the *Swordbearer* RPG?

I hear *Different Worlds 23,* the special superhero issue, and *DW 25*, is sold out. I am certainly glad that circulation is going up.

Ah well, the second issue of HOWIE BARASCH's *The Insider* did not contain anything interesting. I guess I won't be subscribing. Sorry Howie. It just goes to show how difficult this gossip job really is.

Call of Cthulhu sure is popular! Grenadier Models just announced an upcoming line of figures, and Theater of the Mind Enterprises (TOME) announced that they have obtained non-exclusive rights to do *Cthulhu* modules. Initial release should be early next year, and they plan to work closely with Grenadier in cooperative projects.

Congratulations to ELISE GYGAX, who was married earlier this year. Wedding bells also rang for ROBERT ASPRIN and LYNN ABBEY. I wasn't aware it was that time of the year. Sometimes gossip is slow.

FASA announces the end of the partnership agreement which allowed them to publish the *High Passage* magazine. FASA will launch their own *Traveller* magazine, titled *Far Traveller*, edited by J. ANDREW KEITH and WILLIAM H. KEITH. FASA is license-happy these days. They have picked up the rights to do a game based on the upcoming *Star Trek* TV series, and on *The Devlin Connection*, starring ROCK HUDSON as a retired CIA agent and private eye. Other projects include *Dark Assassin*, a *Thieves' World* module, and *Revenge of Markeesh*, a *RuneQuest* module, by Christmas. Looks like they will be busy for the next two years at least. For a change of pace, Martian Metals will be coming out with their line of figures for FASA's *Grav Ball* game.

On a sad note, I announce the death of GENE DAY. Gene contributed his artistic talents to such game projects as *Call of Cthulhu, Space Opera*, and *Nomad Gods*, and his own fanzine *Dark Fantasy*, but was best known for his work at Marvel Comics. He will be missed.

The results of the 1982 Games Day Award from England are in. *D&D* won first prize for best role-playing game, *Griffin Mountain* for the best scenario, *White Dwarf* for the best game magazine, *Dragon Lords* for best fanzine, Citadel's *Traveller* series won for best SF figure range and their *Fantasy Tribes* for fantasy, best games manufacturer was TSR, best new game was *Stormbringer*, best games personality was IAN LIVINGSTONE, and best games inventor was GARY GYGAX. Congratulations to all.

In an attempt to boost sagging sales, Judges Guild announces that they have enclosed $400 in gift certificates in 3000 random copies of *Valley of the Road of Parth*.

JAKE JAQUET has resigned as publisher of TSR's *Dragon*. DAVE COOK will be the magazine's new publisher. Jake apparently objected to running the recent infamous articles by E. GARY GYGAX. Jake will start his own publication, *Gameplay*, published by Crystal Publications. It will aim for general gaming interests. Will Jake change his name back to Gary?

MIKE CARR has changed positions at TSR. He is now a designer for their education department writing *Endless Quest* books.

Non-news: Flying Buffalo announces that their game division will now be called Blade. They plan heavy advertising using their new name.

It is amusing to note the **"Designer's Ramblings"** in the second edition of *Beyond the Stellar Empire* by Adventures by Mail. The writer accuses all the other PBM companies of insufficient playtesting and greedy management. Yet this is in a second edition rulebook required for all players due to numerous changes from the first edition and is automatically charged to every player's account!

There seems to be a class action suit brewing against TSR for repudiating all existing subscriptions to *S&T, Ares*, and *Moves*. The matter is being reviewed by the Office of Consumer Protection in Madison, WI.

Is Avalon Hill that desperate? Rumour tells me TOM MOLDVAY, formerly of TSR, got a $10,000 advance to do a fantasy role-playing game for them sight unseen.

The great paper chase is on for the [illegible]

CENSORED

Publications.

Alas, the *Tunnels & Trolls* game for Colecovision will not be available until 1983. For the record, MIKE STACKPOLE will not be involved with the final product. Coleco, meanwhile, seeks to enlarge its game design staff. Serious applicants please form a line. PAUL JAQUAYS will be your boss.

There is a new club for you to join. It is the Brotherhood of Adventurers, Rogues and Thieves (BART), sponsored by Gamelords. It is easy to see why it is a brotherhood instead of a fellowship. Benefits include a free newsletter, a directory of members, and a 10% discount at game cons from participating dealers.

With ORIGINS '83 in Detroit and ORIGINS '84 set for Dallas, rumors are starting to circulate about the site of ORIGINS '85. One possible bidder is the Chicago Wargamers Association. Another is the Little Rock, Arkansas, FRP Club.

Love,

Gigi

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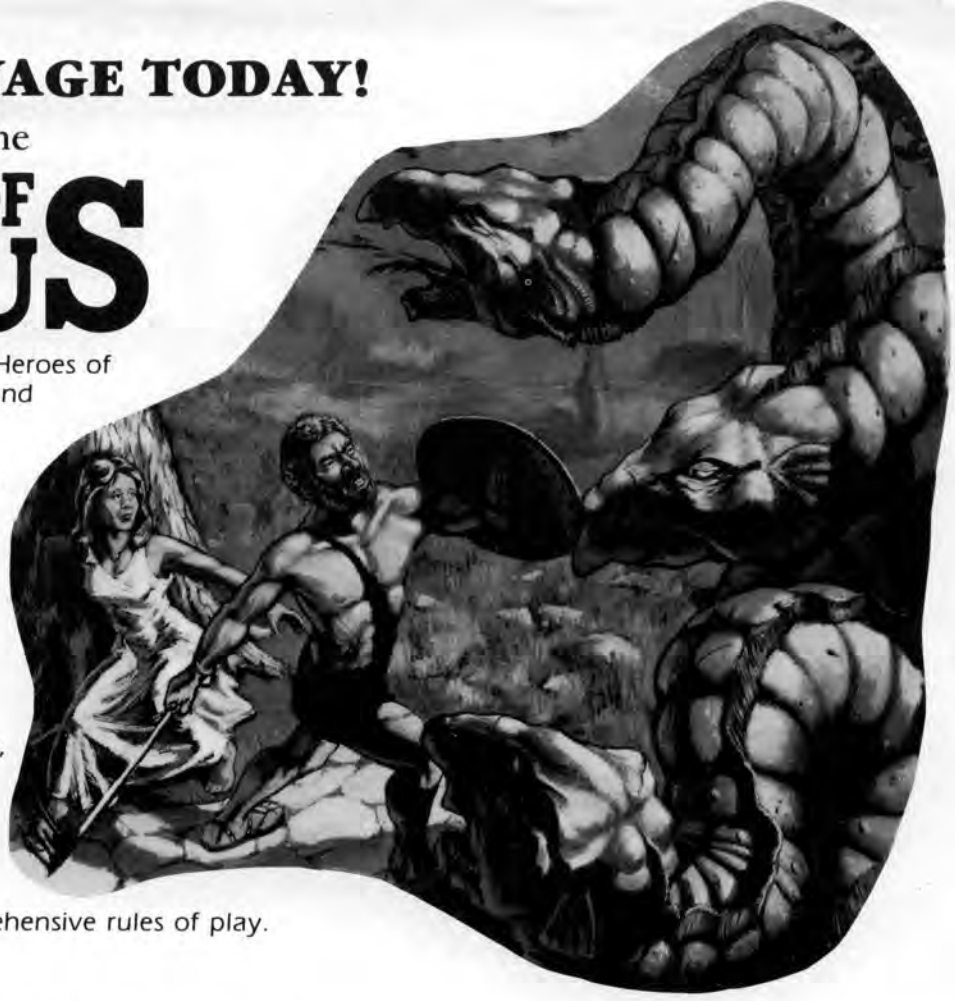

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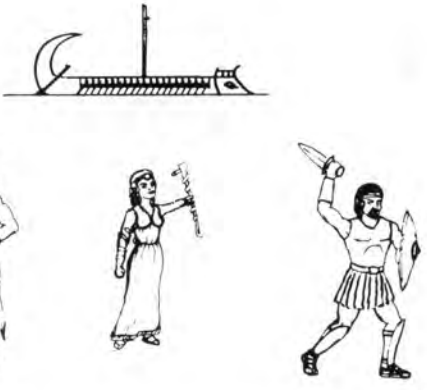

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ALSO, look for these Feature Articles on HEROES OF OLYMPUS in NEXUS # 3: 1. Who's Who — a compendium of lesser Heroes; 2. A synopsis of the voyage of the Argo; 3. Dennis Sustare's supplement, Egyptian Gods and Myths; 4. An all new scenario on famous Heroes at the battle of Troy.

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